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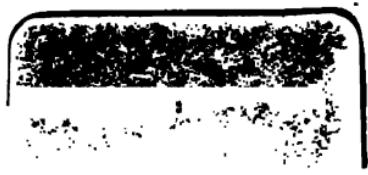
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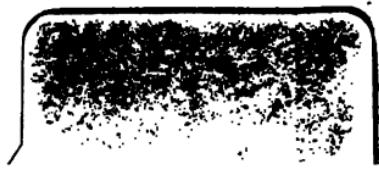


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S E R M O N S.

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C H R I S T
ON EARTH, IN HEAVEN,
AND
ON THE JUDGMENT SEAT.

BY
THE REV. J. GARBETT,
RECTOR OF CLAYTON, SUSSEX, AND PROFESSOR OF POETRY.

VOL. I.

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TO

BENJAMIN PARSONS SYMONS, D.D.

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

These Volumes

ARE INSCRIBED AS A PUBLIC MARK OF HIS

RESPECT AND REGARD

BY

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

ONLY a few words are necessary, by way of introduction, to the following discourses.

1. They are sermons, not essays. They deal and reason with *living men*, not abstractions, and creatures of the closet. They therefore take, as they naturally arise, *the objections* to divine things, and to the truths of the Gospel, which, even in the least instructed of our congregations, form a sort of floating, undigested *theory of unbelief*. No addresses, whose object is to persuade, can be really efficient which do not deal with them ; but fall dead and pointless. They are above or below the mark.

Moreover, only a large pastoral experi-

ence, and *actual contact with men's souls*, can give us a knowledge of those practical workings of the human *heart* which determine the relation of the Gospel to the *intellect*. *The will shapes the thoughts.*

2. The *topics* of which these discourses treat, though not numerous, yet touch the innermost depths and mysteries of revelation and of the human spirit! To shun them, as is usually the practice in *ordinary congregations*, is only to consult our own indolence, and to refuse a mighty instrument which God himself has provided for elevating the feelings and enlarging the minds of them that hear us! It is to feed them, not on the inexhaustible richness of the living word, but on a scanty and starveling diet, ill fitted to nourish and sustain a soul which has any depth or capacity of thought and feeling! Nor indeed can the full *power of a living faith* be duly exhibited, save in workings as large, and free, and diversified as the glorious sphere in which Al-

mighty God has commissioned it to move, even the whole written word. Within this, faith freely ranges, looking *in* and *through* all things, to Him who is the way, and the truth, and the life; who is the *substance* of the word, and of the sacraments, the portion of his saints, and the very image of God!

3. In those discourses which, from *visible and local effects*, infer the spiritual fulness of our Lord and Saviour, I have adopted a *mystical* interpretation of Holy Writ! In so doing, I have only followed that train of thought which, by a law of our nature, irresistibly suggests itself to every full and meditative mind, and which runs, in many a vein of gold, unjustly undervalued in our time by many good men, through the comments of the greatest of the ancient Fathers. As evidence, or argument with an infidel, or for the establishment of doctrine, this system is indeed illogical and dangerous; and its application, both in ancient and modern times, not unseldom puerile. But still,

truth being admitted, and doctrine established, it is, when under due control, fertile in manifold beauty of illustration, and the soundest edification.

4. As will be obvious at first sight to any one versed in the services of our Church, I have attempted to combine the epistle, gospel, and collect of the day, wherever it has been practicable, into the illustration of a single topic, and to subordinate them to a single leading thought. It is to be regretted that so few, out of the whole of our epistles and gospels, have been modelled upon this plan. It is usually impossible to trace any such predominant idea! Would that it were otherwise!

5. I have always taken the authority of the common version of the Scriptures, even in texts which admitted of critical discussion and refinement, as best for practical purposes.

Finally, in treating of the same subject, though in *many* aspects, an occasional repetition both of topic and expression, has been unavoidable.

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SERMON I.

1 COR. iv. 1.—“ Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

MATT. xi. 10.—“ Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, to prepare thy way before thee.”

IN the concerns of our souls, as in those of our bodies, and in all our worldly interests, there is nothing like having some clear and determined end in view,—some decided intelligible object should be set before our eyes. Our thoughts and efforts without it, become feeble and desultory: they want combination, and wander hither and thither; wax faint for want of uniform

and steady exertion, and are barren of fruit. It is like what the apostle calls, running *vainly*,—that is, without an eye to the goal; and beating the air,—that is, a wasting of strength and muscle fit for real battles upon *emptiness*.

“I will be great and powerful,” then, one man says; “I will gain such a post or dignity;” and straightway his mind once loose, perhaps, like the string of an unbent bow, becomes tight and vigorous, like the same string when well stretched in its place, full of elasticity and force. He rises early, and late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness,—he has an object and a time for gaining it; to which he looks forward.

“I will be rich,” another says, and straightway all his faculties and efforts are thrown in that direction. He works, and is in earnest. *He has an object* and a time.

“I will take mine ease,” another says, “when I have gained this or that, and eat, drink, and be merry.” He too lives with

a purpose, though a very miserable and contemptible one ; however, such as it is, it serves as a channel for his else unconnected thoughts and wishes to flow in. He bends every thing to this end, and makes it take the colour of his true character and inclination. *He too has an object and a time ! and lives for it.* And thus in a thousand other instances.

So a Christian, *as a Christian*, and by virtue of his being so, has *an object* too, *and a time !* and that is, to prepare for the Lord's advent ; to be ready to meet Christ when he cometh. “Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee !” “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him ;” “Behold I come quickly, even so come, Lord Jesus !” And this mode of speaking is the very best way to compress in one simple expression, yet an expression with meaning in it as deep as the sea, the peculiarities of the Christian's life, and that out of which it issues, even the in-

wrought temper and feeling of the spiritual heart with its hopes and aims. We shall see this if we compare one or two other modes, and those earnest ones, of describing the Christian.

If you say, e. g. that a Christian is *striving to save his soul*, it is indeed perfectly true, so far as it goes : he is so, for without it, as a previous condition, one step is not to be made heavenward. But at best, it does not say enough. It only marks what it is from which the Christian is striving to escape. It is *negative* only. Again, if you say, that he is striving to please Almighty God in Christ Jesus and is a new creature ; that he now loves those commandments, and that holy will to which by nature his soul was contrary, it is to say *much*.—To say that he is reconciled to God, and that, from the reunion which has flowed from hence, he receives into his soul some *drops at least* from those fountains of all perfection, which *before* were sealed to the soul, and for which, nevertheless, without

distinctly knowing it, he thirsted, and the living waters that are therein, is likewise much.

But even this, though it does accurately describe the *present* condition of the true Christian, does not embrace the *future*, and make it one with the *present*. It does not vividly point out the *substance*, yet unseen and within the veil, on which faith has laid hold. It does not *express—imply* it does—the one *living* object to which faith, hope, charity, are all converging; and which blends all things, life and death, and peace and pardon, and joy and penitence, and what is past, present, and to come, all in one truth.

Is there any form of words that does so? Yes; to say that we *wait* for *Christ*, that we *live* in expectation of his coming, does all this. For Christ *is* all things directly or *indirectly*; the way, and the truth, and the life, and justification and sanctification here, and glory hereafter. And *waiting* for his coming comprehends of necessity

as preliminary steps to such a hope, faith, and penitence, and obedience. And *over and above* all this, it represents them as bound up and perfected in that *love* of the Saviour to which they lead, and so sends forth the whole man into the future, wherein the redemption both of soul and body shall be completed in Him, and faith be succeeded by vision.

And so the apostles always speak. It is their answer to all murmurs and sorrows. In comfort, in rebuke, in exhortation, in good or in evil, you see their thoughts drawn—spontaneously, and by an irresistible and sweet force—towards this central point, in which the final rest of all hopes and all hearts—the world's regeneration—is alone to be found. “Are not ye,” says St. Paul, “our rejoicing at the Lord's *coming*?” “waiting for the *coming* of the Lord Jesus Christ;” having hearts “unblameable at the *coming* of our Lord;” “being preserved blameless to the *coming* of our Lord;” “be patient, brethren, to

the *coming* of the Lord ; " that we may not be ashamed before him at his *coming*." I might multiply quotations, such as the season of Advent, and the services of the Church thereon, suggest. But these passages will recall many others to any one acquainted with Scripture, enough and more than enough to prove that it is indeed upon *this*, as a mighty tangible all-containing object, that the soul of the Christian ought to be fixed as its true resting-point.

And certainly, every one will allow one thing—whether he be an openly sinning Christian, or a lukewarm Christian, or a rejoicing and a devoted one ! provided only that he *be* a Christian.—I mean, that there is something marvellously awakening, and which troubles the very depths of the soul, in the *mere mention* of this thing. " The Lord's *coming* !" These are but simple words, it is true, few and simple ; but they are words of power, and conjure up at once a thousand feelings. Look then for a moment at what they mean.

Think of the Judge, bowing the heavens, and coming down, till they are black with clouds beneath and around him, and coals of fire go out from his presence, as he draweth near! And then see the earth dissolving beneath the touch of those flaming feet,— and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, and the books opening in which all the deeds of the body are registered, and the quick and the dead, the young and the old, the minister and the people; and the fire and the sinners, *below*, and, *above*, the saints and the heavenly glories, and the unchangeableness of eternity over all.

Confess, brethren, that we cannot speak, hear, or meditate of all this, without feeling our whole heart shaken and melted within us. For the powers of the world to come sink down upon it and into it, at the thought or even the mention of this coming.

And let another truth be told, brethren. If this thought was always present to your

hearts, and “ prepare for the judgment ” was ever in your ears, a careless or a worldly life would be a thing impossible. For you would live as in the very presence of the Judge, and faith would stretch forth her hand into the future, and make things which are to be as if they were already.

Nor, if you would take it on its joyous side, would the heart of the saints in their temptations, or their sorrows, need any other consolation.

But then men say “ the passions and temptations of this world drive all these things from our hearts ! And we are careful and troubled about many things, which have no concern either with Christ or the soul ! And we become, we hardly know how, the slaves of the present moment and the present interest ; and we learn the world’s ways, whether we will or no, and think the world’s thoughts, and idly echo with our tongues, the world’s talk ! And if the Lord’s coming is forced

now and then upon us, it is like an evil spirit appearing to startle and torment us, and not like an angel from heaven to comfort and support us. And so we turn our eyes and heart from it, till it seems an idle tale, and we are ready to ask with the scoffer of old, ‘Where is the promise of his coming ? all things, since the fathers fell asleep, continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’” I know all this ; the best of us know it, in their measure. It is our sin and infirmity !

Therefore it is, that there hath been set apart from the ascension of our Lord until now, a class of men taken from among their brethren, consecrated by the apostolical laying on of hands, and, if the outward be accompanied by the inward call, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, whose solemn duty it shall be to proclaim in the world’s ears, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, this great truth, in which all truths which concern the soul are bound up,—the coming of Christ at the end of

the world, to judge the quick and the dead. Nay, *we* are in this matter the peculiar servants of Him who hath appointed us to this office in his church.—Servants are we for this very purpose, and stewards, into whose hands have been committed the treasures of grace and truth, deposited in God's word, that they may be faithfully distributed unto the souls committed to our charge.

Hence it is, brethren, because our office is a solemn *trust*, that we are so earnest with you, in season and out of season. Hence it is that we awaken you,—nay, sometimes it might seem, *torment* you, with the truth as it is in Jesus, and the mysteries of the world unseen. Hence it is, that we are bold to oppose your worldly prejudices, to run counter to your opinions and wishes upon heavenly things, to stir up the opposition of that natural temper which longs for “peace, peace,” and warreth with a constant enmity, against all that is holy, and the heavenly, *heart-searching* Spirit

of the gospel of truth, with its sword that divideth the hearts and reins.

You cannot suppose we do this willingly. It is woe to us if we do it not ; here is our reason ! It is not that we are insensible to the desire of pleasing you—it is not that there is any delight in wounding men's pride, or proclaiming unwelcome truths, which, in many cases, we are sure will be rejected. Nay, it is of all things *the most painful* to trace, as we cannot help doing sometimes, in men's countenances, the closing of the ear and the hardening of the heart against the message ; the *incredulous* thought, and the iron will to walk their own way, with which we *see* some men resist the plain, unvarnished truths of holy writ, with whatever affection and solemnity urged upon them. They who have laboured in the vineyard will tell you that, when you join to this the constant feeling of our unworthiness thus to rebuke and exhort our brethren, being only like them made out of sinful dust, and, at the best,

compassed with infirmities;—there would not be courage enough in our hearts to persevere, but for the thought that we must give an account at the judgment-seat of the words which we utter in Christ's name. “Hast thou been a faithful minister of the word of life, or hast thou been unfaithful, with the blood of souls on thy right hand? Hast thou, while for love's sake thou wouldest have given thine own soul for the flock, yet not feared the face of man, whose breath is in his nostrils, when called upon to proclaim the things which are bitter to flesh and blood to receive and bear, but to reject which is death? Promises and threats, rewards and punishments—justification by faith and holiness as the fruit and sign of it—love and obedience—the atoning blood and the sanctifying Spirit—the gospel in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and height—the coming of the Lord to make clean the hearts of his people—the coming of the Lord to judge—the coming of the Lord to

reward—hast thou faithfully, out of the holy book, *proclaimed* them all, or hast thou made *them* to die who should be saved, and mutilated thy commission by holding back the truth from my people? Thou knowest the charge given to thee when thou wast called to be a preacher of the word and a minister of the sacraments! Hast thou kept it like a true-hearted servant? Thou rememberest the scripture, “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:” hast thou added to them? hast thou mixed the word of Him who is the truth and the life, with the devices and glosses of men, and so made them of none effect by thy traditions? And “if any man shall *take away* from the words of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” Hast thou, O man of God, taken away aught from it out of fear or favour? tampered with

the threatenings, or limited the freedom of the promises?" In some such way will the Lord address the steward of his word at the last judgment. And God grant in his mercy that we, and all they who are called to bear this holy commission, may stand clear of the blood of souls in that day! It is easy to understand, I am sure, what comes from the thought of this awful inquisition!

We would fain be pleasing in all things if we *dared*, and within gospel limits we would be all things unto all men, like Saint Paul, that we may save some. This is our wish, and we thank God that things are so ordered frequently, that the *faithful* preaching of the gospel message does not offend even those whom it does not convert! And no wonder: for as we find it in the word, neither more nor less, it carries its own evidence with it. The heart witnesses to it even when it does not accept it; and the duty of propounding it, in all its simplicity, is acknowledged, even when it cannot be done without being gall and bitter-

ness to some that hear. We have reason to rejoice if so it be !

But *any how*, if it should be otherwise, you must bear with us, if we say with St. Paul, “It is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with *me* it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment, yea, I judge not mine own self. He that judgeth me is the Lord.” And what I wish to put clearly before you, after the church’s mind as expressed in the service from which our text is taken, is this : that, throughout, the minister of Christ can never, for a single instant, permit himself to forget the *second* coming of Christ.

It lies at the foundation of every thing ! For, if he be questioned about himself and the truth of his own teachings, his answer is that of the Apostle, “Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart ; and then shall every man have

praise of God," " You will then see, if not before, when God rewards his faithful servants and fearless ministers, that I have indeed preached unto you the word of truth. I must wait till that heart-searching day, if you reject me now."

Again. When we endeavour to recall the hardened sinner from the error of his way, or when we strive to persuade the Christian who is neither hot nor cold, to fight manfully the noble fight of faith, and to put on, as a true soldier, the whole armour of God, what is our *final* argument? What are we brought to at last if men are not moved by the love of Christ? It matters little to plead that Christ *hath* come, and *hath* brought in a new kingdom, and giveth grace unto all that come to him, to be pure, and holy, and obedient unto God. If this were all, the sinner would not be shaken! No! but "Christ cometh AGAIN to judge *the world* in righteousness, and, in the day of his coming, it shall be given unto every man

according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. They that to the flesh sow corruption shall reap death eternal at the judgment."

Or again, as an incitement to holiness it is the same ! We say with the prophet, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth ? for he is like a refiner's fire. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver ; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." How then, we argue, shall we see the Lord without holiness ? or how shall we be ready to meet him who will be a consuming fire to all iniquity, unless we be not only called by his name, but purified by his Spirit ?

And again. If we are called upon to support the afflicted, on whom the hand of God lies heavily, and who have tears for their portion to drink, that which before

wast the mighty instrument to smite the rocky heart in pieces, now bringeth joy to that which grace has softened, and sorrow has brought into the dust. It is the future reward of the saint which availeth to comfort. It is the crown and the palms, the blessed place where there are no tears or sorrows, and into which the hosts of the redeemed shall finally enter, when their Lord cometh to bring them to be sharers of the glory which he had before ever the world was made. It is this which, by the hope of it, makes feebleness strength, and sorrow joy, and swallows up death in victory. And so, though not *directly*, yet *indirectly* and by necessary inference, there is, throughout the Christian course, and the principles which guide and animate it, a reference to this mighty consummation of all things—that coming of Christ in which, as in a knot uniting them, all things shall meet, and heaven and earth be made one. And it is for this coming that the ministers of the word are preparing mankind, by

turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

If you keep this in mind, this constant proclamation of Christ's coming, you will have no difficulty in seeing how striking a resemblance there is between the ministry of John and that of the steward of God's mysteries, down to the very end of the world, and with how much reason the church has combined them in one. They both speak not of themselves, but of another, whose servants they are. John proclaimed the coming of Him whose fan is in his hand, and who shall thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner, and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire,—and so do we.

John proclaimed him as the very Lamb of God who cometh to take away the sins of the world,—and so do we. John bade that a way be made ready in the desert, on which the blessed feet of God incarnate might tread, till fountains should spring forth from the rock, and the wilderness.

through which he travelled should blossom like the rose!—and so do we.

John proclaimed repentance because the kingdom of heaven was at hand,—and so do we, his successors. John was bold and fearless in the strength of God, and of the Spirit that anointed him from the womb. He rebuked sin in the high places of the earth—he made the wilderness resound with the long-expected voice of Elijah, and warned a generation of vipers to flee from the wrath to come. We, indeed, are not clad in the same rugged majesty, nor are we prophets on fire, like him, with a holy wrath. But we must be inspired with the same zeal softened by the love of Christ, and should we need it, brace up our loins to the same heroical hardihood tempered by Christian meekness.

“What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?” said our Lord unto the multitude concerning John, “a reed shaken by the wind?” A man that is of feeble purpose and flexible soul, bent sometimes this

way, and sometimes that, as the variable blasts of human opinion or power might sway him—a mere reed, the sport of any wind that blows ! No ! far otherwise—but a soul and purpose of iron ! And *such should be ours too* ; strong and immovable as the rock on which we rest, the unchangeable word of God. But what went ye out into the wilderness for to see ? a man clothed in soft raiment ? That is, a man studious of his own ease and selfish enjoyment, unfit for the rough struggles with pains and with difficulties, for the hardships of the wilderness and the battle with fierce enemies ? No ! far otherwise—but self-denying, and sternly contemptuous of ease and luxury ! So, by God's help, should *we* likewise be ; the very soldiers and servants of Him who bought us by his blood, and calls us to be as He was. Otherwise we are unfit for our work, too soft, too effeminate for real service. But behold ! what went ye out for to see ? a prophet ? yea, I say unto you, and more than a pro-

phet! For this is He of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

But in one respect we differ from John the Baptist, as he himself differed from those who preceded him. They viewed Christ dimly and from afar, and announced Him in symbols and dark speeches. *He* in plain terms, and as coming on the instant, nay, as *come*, as *present*. He of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, the desire of all nations, *was* actually among them even while he promised Him. The incarnate God was come unto his people. He trod on the heels of his messenger's announcement, as a king usually follows the steps and proclamations of his heralds. But we proclaim Christ as *long since come*, as having not only lived, but as having died for our sins, and risen for our justification, and ascended again, where he was before he left the bosom of his Father; nay as reigning, exalted, and glo-

rified, and worshipped, King of kings ! and Lord of lords !

It is, therefore, with a deeper sense and meaning than the words first appear to bear, that we, as messengers of God, answer in the words of Christ, to them who question his coming; to them who yearn, they hardly know how or why, for deliverance from that thraldom of body and spirit to which all men are born, yet have not full faith in Christ, as the sole predestined deliverer of spirits out of prison. “Art thou he that should come?” said John’s disciples to Jesus, “or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again the things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached.”

Exactly so do we answer now-a-days to any earnest inquirer after truth, who indeed longs for deliverance from this body

of death ! If he doubt whether there be a heavenly kingdom and a real Saviour in the midst of us, we say, look and see, from the coming of Christ until now—judge for yourself. The *blind receive their sight* ! How ? you will say ! Why, those who were even so lost and embruted by sin, that they called darkness light and light darkness, and took evil for good and good for evil, have clearly, in the presence of the world, been brought to adore the *beauty* of that truth and goodness which once they beheld not at all ! They *were* blind, but *now* they see.

The *lame walk*. How ? Why they that were *feeble* and poor of purpose, *maimed*, so to say, in *soul*, and unable to act or think or speak without leaning upon other men, have become bold, *strong* in will and upright in the way, needing none to support them but Him whom they see by faith ! *They were lame*, now they walk. The *lepers are cleansed*. How ? They who were covered over with vices

and corruptions, a real and visible leprosy of the soul, have, as manifestly, become pure and holy and undefiled, formed and fashioned anew; and, in heart and soul and in the fruits that flow from them, the very contraries to their former selves. They *were lepers*, but are *cleansed*.

The deaf hear. They who once turned ear and heart away from sacred counsels and wise reproof, are become meek and gentle like children, swift to hear, and eager to admit all that is good and wise into their inmost souls. *They were deaf*, but now *they hear*.

Nay, the very *dead are raised up*. They who had no more sense of things heavenly or power of acting upon them than a corpse has of life, being dead in trespasses and sins, are now full of a divine and purifying spirit. The stiffened limbs are unbent, the senses have regained their vital energy—they move, they speak, they act, *they live* to the God unto whom they were once utterly dead. They *were dead*, but now *they live*.

The poor have the gospel preached unto them, and herein is the greatest marvel of all.

The very lowest and humblest of mankind are, in the most *precious* treasures of all, and in a true nobility, raised to a level with kings and princes. Yea, if they know not the gospel and the riches of Christ, kings and princes are very poor in the eyes of God, and of his holy angels, and of all his saints, very poor and very miserable compared with the meanest in the kingdom of heaven! Rejoice! ye poor, and miserable, and oppressed, and despised, for Christ is come. The gospel is preached unto you, and great is your reward when, at the last day, he cometh to take unto himself his kingdom, and shall reign with his saints for ever.

Christ, therefore, is not only *to come* but he is come. He is in the midst of us;—not only in his church and in his ministers, and in his sacraments, ready to reveal himself to them who have the faith to receive

Him : but He dwelleth in his living temple, the Lord of all that believe upon Him. "For the righteousness which is of faith," saith St. Paul, " speaketh in this wise ; say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven ! (that is, to bring Christ from above,) or who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring Christ again from the dead). But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, that is, the *word of faith which we preach.*" His second coming to judge, is only the completion of the kingdom, whereby He already reigneth in the hearts of his saints.

He will be no stranger to them when he appeareth, for He is already their joy, and their exceeding great reward. He will be no terror to them, though heaven and earth flee from his countenance, for he knoweth his own and his own know Him. And being made like the angels, they shall spring into the air to meet him at his coming, and they shall stand round about the judgment-seat, and they that be just

shall shine as the sun, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever! And we and they shall return with Him into the presence of his Father and their Father, and his God and their God, and so shall they ever be with the Lord! Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who, at thy first coming, didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that, at thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen!

SERMON II.

Rom. xv. 4.—“ Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning ; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.”

IT is marvellous, if you come to consider it, how vast a difference there is, in the manner of men’s hearing and reading Holy Scripture ! Heaven is not further from earth, than the man who has been converted by the Spirit of God is from him who with the name of Christian, and with the water of baptism once sprinkled on his forehead, has no perception of divine things ! To the latter they convey no more meaning than words on any other subject in which he has no particular in-

terest. Or, if in some tempers of mind, he is struck by that beauty which fills and shines through the word of God, like an inward light, still there is a lack of practical application. It seems of no especial *use* to him. It answers nothing in himself. Its declarations gratify no hopes. They feed no hunger and thirst of the soul. They are not powerful to remove doubts or fears. At best they are like the sounds of one who plays cunningly on a musical instrument, and, whilst they charm the ear at one moment, vanish from mind and memory the next.

Now, what is infinitely important to observe is, no book is like this book. There is no doubt that much of what *men* have written in worldly books is beautiful and attractive! But it is, after all, not so much *things* which they have set down therein, as notions and pleasing fancies only! When the hour's amusement or instruction is gone they have no existence, there is no substance in them. But the *word of God* is

all made up of *things, not notions*. It speaks from first to last, of that which has a *real* existence, and neither changes nor passes away. *God* is such a *reality*. He is what he is, whether you think or speak of him or no. Your souls are *realities*—things which live and *will* live, with a world of misery or happiness in the depths of them, whether you perfect them or not. Heaven and hell are such realities—the one is bright and blissful, the other the place of woe and wailing; the one for the saints, the other for the ungodly, whether they are in our thoughts or not.

And so it is, touching all the warnings and counsels to men of which the holy book is full. All this, too, is just the opposite of mere *words*. *They* are but sounds, this has a *power* in it. The *letter* of scripture is only the body for a mighty *soul*; and that soul is the Holy Spirit. And, by virtue of his presence in the book and in our hearts at once, it changes, it comforts, it persuades, it guides, in deed.

and in truth, proving that it has life in it. Yes, but you may say, “it was addressed to other people, and not to *us*! And there is our difficulty, and the reason why our hearts do not respond to it, nor our thoughts feed upon it, as they do on what comes nearer to us and touches our soul.” But here is the *mistake*—it is addressed to *you*—to each *individual* soul the voice is sent. Be it threat, or promise, or history, it matters not what, it is intended for each of you in particular.

But, again, you may say, “surely Paul, and Peter, and John, living so many hundreds of years ago, before we were born, or even the countries we live in had any name, or the races from which we spring any existence, could have had no thought of *us*, when they wrote what we now possess under their names.” True, but God who touched their lips, and inspired their holy hearts, *had* thought of you. The Spirit, the changing, hallowing, sanctifying Spirit that dwelleth in holy writ, *had*

thought of you. Christ the Saviour to whom that blessed Spirit ever ministers, had a clear foreknowledge of every soul for whom his blood was shed ! And to their guidance and support, therefore, he adapted the word of his apostles and prophets.

Moreover, do not permit yourselves to be deceived by mere names. For, just as Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; and as his word, in like manner, knoweth neither times nor seasons, and neither changeth nor wasteth away ; so it is with those to whom that word is sent ! Say what you will about a few outward circumstances which are ever varying, the Christian's life, and the Christian's heart, and the Christian's hopes and fears, are *exactly* now, what they were eighteen hundred years ago. The alteration is only in look, and the outside of things. Just as you may see a brook, still rolling on and on before your eyes. The current itself is always changing, and fresh waters bubble up from the spring and follow the old. But still

you *rightly* call the brook itself the same. It flows on in the same manner, it reflects the same trees or stones on its banks, issues from the same source, and reaches the same termination. So it is with the generations of men, whether you consider them in relation to another life or to this. They are made of the same materials,—still the same flesh and blood, the same minds, and the same hearts, and the picture of one is the picture of all. When you read the Scriptures, therefore, cease to think of Romans, and Corinthians, or Ephesians, or Jew or Gentile. Think of *yourselves* instead, for they were written for your learning, that you might read, and mark, and inwardly digest them, and find life eternal the fruit of them !

But the true reason of this want of *solidity* which men find in the Scriptures, this lack of what they may, so to say, touch and feel and apply to daily use, arises from another cause. The very main thing of all, the *centre*, about which,

in one form or other, they all revolve—everlasting life through Jesus Christ—is, in far too many, *a shadow*. It is not like their worldly occupations, and worldly wants, into which their thoughts and hearts are thrown with a living vigour, and unaffected interest. It is all dim, and shadowy, and distant. And it comes and goes, and is sometimes seen, and sometimes not. And, therefore, if the *great thing* of all, that to which all our thoughts and desires are to be directed, produces so faint an impression, or no impression at all, upon men's hearts, no wonder that what is written or said, though by the Spirit of God himself, about it, should have just the same effect and no more. Faith in the reality of life everlasting! faith in God! faith in Christ, his Son and our Lord; faith in his merits, and power, and glorious majesty, as God with us and in us! Let there be *this*, and holy scripture will become, in a moment, the light of our eyes, and the guide of our steps, the

heavenly manna of our souls, and our exceeding great treasure above gold and precious stones !

And, now, look, I pray you, at the point to which, the scripture out of which my text is taken *specially* directs the disciples, as being their heavenly Father's purpose in holy writ. It is the *comfort and consolation* which they were to derive from these living oracles. The apostle takes for granted the earnestness of their hearts, and the reality of their faith. He does not doubt, that they felt the powers of the world to come upon their souls—not in the way of terror, but in the holding forth of an unspeakable reward to all who, being redeemed by the blood of Christ, should fight the good fight of faith, in his strength and conquering name. And to *them* therefore, and to all such, down to the world's end,—to me and you, I trust, among the rest,—this was the light in which the great and eternal God was to be presented. This is the character in which,

in his words, he revealed himself to his children. To say that he is a God of comfort and consolation, is only saying that he is indeed our Father, who pitith his children, and remembereth that they are but dust. When we are sad, therefore, or doubtful, or weary, and fly to Him for succour, He looketh kindly upon us, and there is love and pity to us in his fatherly countenance. And he openeth his mouth, and talketh to us, kindly and familiarly, in words of encouragement and consolation.

Again : “the *God of patience*,” says the apostle ; that is, it is He, who teaches us, that during this our condition of trial, it becomes us to bow to his holy will, with an entire *submission*. So to bring our hearts into subjection, that the very trials and *sorrows* of life, if such befall us, for the Gospel’s sake, shall not make us murmur, or complain ; but only minister opportunities of obedience, and a trustful rejoicing in his will. This is a great work of divine grace, of which the apostle

speaks, brethren,—this sweet and loving submission to our Father's will, and such a trusting of ourselves in his hand, that the rod itself shall only be to us another form of his love. And well does it deserve that the *word* should specially direct us to it. Hear what divine things the oracles of God say of it : “Knowing that tribulation worketh *patience*, and *patience experience*, and experience *hope* ;” the very way, in which the apostle puts it here, you see. “That ye through *patience*, and comfort of the scriptures, might *have hope*”—the same thing again. “Remembering your *patience of hope* in Jesus.” Again hope and *patience* are brought together. “The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ.” “And follow after love, *patience*, meekness.” “Let us run with *patience* the race that is set before us.” “Who through faith and *patience* inherit the promises.” I have quoted enough. You see how *consistent* scripture is with itself in this matter, and how full it is, of encou-

ragement to this heavenly virtue, without which we cannot be conformed to the image of Christ; or possess that *temper of mind*, that complete *submission*, without which it does not seem possible for any soul to be a sharer of the inheritance of the saints, or fit for the peculiar employments of that heavenly kingdom.

Nay, but if there be no *patience*, there can be no good ground of hope. There can be no present experience of the power of the Spirit, to change that temper of self-love and self-seeking which is natural unto all men's hearts. There is no consciousness of the sufficiency of our Lord and Saviour for the present happiness of those who trust in Him! no sense that He is even now the exceeding reward of those, who, deliberately choosing Him as their Lord and Master, do really in him enjoy and inherit for evermore the fulness and the infinite perfections of God himself. "For we are Christ's," saith the apostle, "and Christ is God's." And when patience hath thus

realized hope, what exhaustless consolations does holy scripture supply, to keep it alive and vigorous, and to make the earthly pilgrimage of the saints only a short journey to their eternal home. As things are, *our* pain and trials are not worth mentioning. But even if there *were* laid upon us the manifold afflictions, which, in those ancient times in which the apostle wrote, tried the servants of Christ, as in a sevenfold furnace, yet still what St. Paul says would be true. "The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." "Then patience," we may say, with scripture in our hands, "O Christian, the trial may be sharp, but it is short, and the reward is eternal! The servant is not greater than his master. The saints and apostles won their crown through much tribulation! Complain not, if thou art a true soldier of the great Captain of our salvation, if the contest be sometimes grievous unto flesh and blood! Christ will support the faint-

ing heart and the feeble knees! All will be forgotten, when thou shalt see Him at his appearing, and He shall say unto thee, “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

And the apostle encourages the disciples unto this glorifying of Christ in patience and love, which is its companion and sister, by a consideration which applies quite as much to us as to them.—I mean the frequent promises with which scripture abounds, of mercy to the Gentiles, and God’s calling them from all the ends of the earth, to be children of his family, and sharers in salvation with his ancient people. “ That the Gentiles,” says he, “ might glorify God for his mercy, as it is written, For this cause I will confess unto thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.” And again he saith, “ Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.” And again, “ Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye people.”

And surely *this* is a great ground of hope

and consolation, of which Holy Writ is full; that He hath called *us*, though Gentiles, and made us his children, if we will keep his covenant, by adoption and grace, and set us apart for his glory as he did Israel of old. I know very well, when I say this, the difficulty there is in making men's hearts alive to this thought. Men look with no more gratitude and admiration on the blessings and privileges which in this land of ours are showered upon them, than they do on the common dust and stones under their feet. At best, to believe the gospel, and to be called Christians, and to be invited every day of our lives to accept everlasting salvation through Jesus Christ, seem blessings which are quite as much in the settled course of nature as the rising of the sun, and the common air and light. Few of us are conscious of any *special* thoughtful mercies to *themselves in particular*, in being made partakers of this mighty spiritual inheritance. Yet what ingratitude it is! what insen-

sibility! what miserable littleness of mind, as well as hardness of heart! Alas! what makes *us* to differ from others? Take it out of generalities, bring it home to yourselves. Why were I and you born in a land, wherein the true light shineth, and in a church where the truth as it is in Christ Jesus is open to all, instead of being heathens or savages? Why are not we among the hundreds of millions upon the face of the earth, to whom the will of God is utterly unknown, and on whom the glory of his countenance has never shone? Nay, but the apostle always speaks in scripture, of the admission of the Gentiles *at all* into the covenant of mercy, as a great mystery, now wonderfully, at last, revealed unto the children of men! It is with Him a mystery of love,—a mystery, the revelation of which, should make men's hearts leap with joy, and their tongues resound with praises, and which their thoughts should never be weary of dwelling upon! And surely, over and above the *general* call

of the Gentiles, there is another mystery. It is an act of *will* and deliberate choice on the part of Almighty God, into the reasons of which we cannot penetrate,—that *I and you*, and a few millions more of men, few in comparison of the whole of mankind, *should have* the gospel given to us. It is his loving pleasure that we should be admitted so to say into the secrets of God's love and mercy, while the far greater part of the sons of Adam, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, are shut out, to all appearance, from the household of faith, and the fountains of life! There is indeed, a great *mystery* herein.

But I do not mention it here to enlarge upon it, as it deserves to be enlarged upon, but only to point to it, as does the apostle, as one of the *special comforts* which we are to derive from holy scripture. It is to the earnest Christian a great support. It makes faith stronger. It gives hope a brighter eye, and a firmer step, and a more resolute grasp upon everlasting life. Surely

each Christian among us ought to say; “Since God hath done so much for me already, since he has crowned me with such special blessings, as fall not to the lot of other men, who deserve them nevertheless quite as much as I—a miserable sinner but for God’s mercy—can possibly do, He will not leave me or forsake me now. He has not called me, I am certain, without the purpose to make the call effectual, unless I harden my heart against it. He has not, only to disappoint me, brought me within sight of heaven, and told me such marvellous things about the glory and the bliss of the land of the saints, where He himself dwelleth and shineth. He has not determined after all, to leave me half way; to let me grow faint in my journey, and to die for lack of the food and support which I need. No, He hath done great things for me, and He means me for greater, unless I thwart his will, and renounce his covenant! He is my Father, and what a father’s love is

I know, and see with my own eyes every day the evidences of it. No father, if a son asks a fish, gives him a serpent, or if he asks for meat gives him a stone ; and if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him ! In this firm persuasion, then, I will labour diligently in the Lord's vineyard, and strive, in the confident hope of success, to make my calling therein and my election sure !”

“And again, Esaias saith,” writeth the apostle, “ There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust !” And this is a *practical use* of scripture, and all among you will witness to me, who are engaged earnestly in working out, with fear and trembling, their soul’s salvation, that it is one most full of comfort to us amidst the difficulties, and occasional doubts, and inevitable sorrows of our christian course. And to give us this *particular*

support and consolation, by exhibiting the already special mercies of God towards us, the word of God is, as the apostle implies, expressly constructed.

And this leads me to the only other point, in connexion with the use of scripture, to which I shall refer, and which is the subject of the gospel of the day. And that is, that while the holy book is full, as we have seen, of *direct* promises, and special encouragements, both of unmixed mercy, so in a marvellous manner, it renders even God's terrible judgments—the consuming fires of his wrath—only so many tokens of mercy to them that love him. He darteth forth from the same eyes flames of vengeance and beams of love ! So it was to be, *in the first place*, in that awful destruction of Jerusalem, which is the forerunner and emblem of the day of judgment. *That* coming of the Lord had a twofold aspect. It was accompanied, on one hand, by the destruction of the enemies who would not have Him to rule

over them, and by the planting of the abomination of desolation in the violated sanctuary! On the other, it brought deliverance to the saints who had suffered persecution from the foes of God and Christ, who were thus overwhelmed; the saints, to whom Jerusalem, since the death of their Lord, had been, not Mount Zion the city of God, but Aceldama, a field of blood, and a reprobate foredoomed! In all the convulsions, therefore, which preceded the dismal ruin, and the portents in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, which showed a mysterious sympathy with the impending judgments, the Christians only saw the tokens of their deliverance! And that which made all other hearts fail for fear, filled theirs with courage.

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming

upon the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

And, on the same principle, in *all* times of public calamity, when the wrath of God seems more especially to reveal itself, and the sins of the people come before Him to be terribly remembered, the true disciple of Christ still discerns, on the strength of his holy word, the tokens of his love for them that fear Him. "The sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night." "A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh unto thee."

So it is, at that final trial, which we must all encounter, when the wrath of God goeth forth, as the threatened chastisement of sin, against that tabernacle of dust and ashes in which he hath made the

spirit to dwell. And these signs of his anger against sin, when men are dying, are more terrible, and come nearer home, than any sign which could flame out of the firmament; and the heart of the transgressor sinks, and he trembles at the thought of the things which are fast coming upon him. Little as he may have trembled at the thought of the destruction of Jerusalem, or that of the whole world, yet he begins to do so at the dissolution of himself; for that *self* is, after all, to *us*, the world, and more than the world, even all that we possess and all we are! But, then, according to his Lord's promise, the Christian lifteth up his head, for the time of his deliverance is at hand. The failing of the flesh, the darkening of the eyes, the struggle by which the bonds of body and soul are broken asunder, are to him only the sure signs of the coming life, and the dawn of an everlasting glory. The Lord is come to him according to his promise, and he departs in peace according to his word.

Finally, whether those holymen are right or not, who imagine that they discern in these our times, the scriptural signs of the dissolution of the present earth, and the advent of Christ to judge and reign, I will not say, nor have I any time to examine. But certain it is, that they *are* awful times, marked to the eyes of all those who have studied history and its best interpreter, the word of God, the most profoundly,—by tokens of mighty changes and sweeping convulsions, such as have never been from the beginning of the world until now. We know not how soon the sea and the waves may wax fiercer, and the heavens be shaken, and the sun be turned into blood, when the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come ! It behoves us, therefore, to possess our souls in patience, and to be watching !

Any how, at the *greatest and last of all days*, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the whole earth, with its mountains, and seas, and plains, shall

be cast into the fire, the signs of the Lord's coming will not deceive us. They will indeed be terrible to them who have not lived or died in Him; as they rise from the grave they shall call on the hills to cover them. But they shall be to *us* who live and die in Jesus, only the signal that death is conquered, and sin is destroyed, and that the saints have begun to reign!

Thank God, then, brethren, this day and all days, who, in his holy book, hath given us such full assurance of hope; and hath promised therein, that sorrows shall be turned into joys, and death into life, and the flames of wrath into the assurance of love! “Behold the fig tree and all the trees! When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves, that summer is now nigh at hand; so likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

Blessed Lord ! who hath caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning ; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them ; that, by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON III.

MATT. xxi. 5.—“Tell ye the daughter of Zion,
Behold ! thy king cometh unto thee !”

THIS Sunday, the beginning of our holy year, as you see by the collect, is called Advent Sunday, which means the day of the coming ! the coming of the King of Zion to his people, whom at last he had visited. He manifested himself openly upon it, to claim that all knees should bow to him, and all hearts love him, and all lips praise him, because he had brought the salvation promised from the foundation of the world. “Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold ! thy king cometh !”

No one, I should think, who reads this account of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, from which my text is taken, can fail to be struck by the contrast which it presents to the ordinary quiet moving to and fro of our Lord! We see no more the noiseless peaceful steps which no one marked, and the voice which was not heard in the streets, in its gentleness and holiness! But here you find all on a sudden, that he enters the holy city with a *humble* pomp, certainly, but still *with a* pomp which betokens a royal dignity! He no longer flies, as he did of old, to far off mountains and wildernesses, lest the people should seize him, and make him a king! On the contrary, in the royal seat of David, he permits himself to be called David's son, who came, in the name of the Lord, to sit upon David's throne.

Every thing marks the king! The multitude spread their garments all along the way, as was done in those countries when great monarchs condescended to travel.

They marked thereby their feeling that the bare, common ground was too vile for his royal feet to tread upon ! And those holy feet, which had been so often way-worn and weary, as they wandered up and down from Jerusalem to Galilee, with the message of mercy, did not refuse the mark of reverence.

The multitude lifted up their voices and shouted, as men are wont to do on days of triumph, and He did not rebuke them. Nay, when the Pharisees required him to check what they accounted the blasphemy of his followers, he replies with a kingly sternness. He silences all objection by saying, that if *they* did not open their mouths to praise Him, the very stones themselves would immediately cry out.

Once before the city had been moved concerning Him ! When the wise men came from the east in search of the new born king, and visited Jerusalem in their journey to Bethlehem, we are told, that when Herod heard these things he was

troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And now, says the Scripture, “when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?” Nor was this the last time that it was thus moved by Him who was thus approaching. Deeply, and to the very foundation was it shaken, when, but a *few days afterwards*, this same Jesus, whom, for a moment, it seemed to throw open its gates and towers to welcome, was crucified between two thieves upon the tree. Nay, the very same lips which now cried Hosanna! then shouted “Crucify!” And the heavens grew dark at the impious deed, and the earth shook, and the rocks rent, and men smote upon their breasts, half in sorrow, half in awe, and they looked up in expectation of some terrible judgment to come from above on such a sin and such sinners! And *once more* still was the royal and wicked city moved by Him, when he came in clouds to destroy it for its iniquity, and its streets were filled with blood, and the temple had not one

stone left upon another, and Mount Zion became a heap and a desolation! “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem; thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold! thy house is left unto thee desolate.”

Observe, “*Ye would not*,” he says. And yet, when one reads the account in scripture, and witnesses the joy of the multitude, and the shouting, it is hardly possible not to say to oneself, “Well, at last the hard hearts of this people are softened, and the eyes which have been so long blinded are opened! and Israel is indeed about to acknowledge their King, and He will reign on Mount Zion, and before his ancients gloriously!” Often and often, I am sure, as we have read and pondered over the whole account, it still seems as difficult as ever to understand the rejection which so immediately follows; or to

remove from our heart its natural expectation. And yet so it was ! and the reason why it was so is plainly marked, if we examine well, in the very account of this temporary triumph of our Lord.

For, first of all, look at what the prophet says when he described, long before, this entrance of the holy King into Jerusalem, and the public and final proclamation to the Jewish people of the arrival of their Messiah ! “ Behold,” he says, “ thy King cometh unto thee, *meek!* ” Here then was the difficulty. If their King had come and said to them, “ You crave for riches ! there they are for you. Come and be as rich as you wish ! ” Or, “ You are athirst for rank and power ! Come and sit upon my right hand and on my left, and you shall be the mighty ones of the earth ! ” Or, “ You burn to free yourselves from these proud Romans who are now your lords and masters, and, though they are heathens, yet oppress *you* who are God’s people. Come to me, and I will break the yoke from off your

necks, and they, who now grind you into the dust, shall serve you as your slaves !” Had He promised this, no one can doubt that they would gladly have followed and obeyed Him. The learned scribe and proud Pharisee would have discovered, immediately, the signs of the true Messiah in Him whom they now rejected. And even the scornful, worldly, pleasure-loving Saducee, would have joined the train of Him who could thus dispense, at his will, riches and pleasures ! But it was a very different matter to become servants of a king whose dignity was a heavenly meekness,—whose kingship was veiled in flesh, and a body of humiliation—whose countenance was sorely marked by sadness, and furrowed with many tears ! They liked not a sovereign whose first requirement craved that, as *he* was, so should his servants be,—images of the meek, and baptized into the likeness of the Man of sorrows. They were not for meekness and the meek ! They were for pride and power, and for them who, within and with-

out, should be clothed with both. Meekness to the slave ! humiliation to the heathen ! But pride to the Israelites, and power to the chosen people !

And not only his meekness, but his holiness, and zeal for the purity of God's worship, and the spiritual sanctity of his temple wrought against him. " And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple; and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves ! And he said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." Thus he appeared as a purifier, a liberator of the house of God from them who profaned the sacredness of the place wherein the Most High dwelt ! But surely, we may say, they who reverenced so much the majesty of that beautiful house, which they promised themselves would stand as long as the sun and moon endured, could not be offended by

this. No, but they were offended by *that* truth of which the purification of the material temple was the symbol, the cleansing, that is, of the living temples of God. They liked not the removing out of the heart, wherein his true dwelling is, of all that offendeth, of the secret thoughts which pollute the seat, and affront the presence of the Holy Spirit! “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which, indeed, appear beautiful outward, but are, within, full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness!”

You see, therefore, the cause of his rejection. You see why it was all in vain that the blind received their sight, and the deaf heard, and the lame walked, and the lepers were cleansed, and the dead lived, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them! You see why it was all in vain that he spake as never man spake, and did as never man besides did, and even in his humility was only the more divine.

In vain, under the form of a servant, did He shine forth as the King of righteousness, and as the Prince of peace ! Their hearts were against Him ! Their souls were far from HIM ; and the more brightly the light shone, the more they hated it. And the more their hearts were smitten, the harder they made them. And the more undeniably his glory was manifested, the more fiercely they rejected Him. And so the proclamation of him as king, led to his death as a malefactor, and his advent became his rejection !

And now let us turn from his *ancient* people, who are still being scourged by the hand of God, because they thus rejected their King when he came unto them ! Let us look at ourselves, who have succeeded into their room, and are now what they were of old, God's children and chosen people.

In one respect, *I know*, that we differ from them. *We* do acknowledge Him whom they rejected. We are proud to

call ourselves by that name which, with them, was a reproach and an infamy ; and that cross on which they slew the Lord of life is to us a rejoicing ! Nay, the very outward sign of it is a symbol of an immortal hope springing out of death. In this respect he *is come* among us, and we have not rejected him ! And we rejoice in the light of his countenance, and profess ourselves servants of this King of kings ! So far it is well.

But this is not all ; and I delight to think, that many among you know, by your own experience, that it IS not all. For if it went no farther than this, it would indeed be a coming among us of his name and title ! It would indeed be a coming among us of an outward acknowledgment of his kingship ! Nay, He himself might be present in his church, folded round, so to say, in his word ; concealed in his congregation, dwelling in his sacraments, and ready to be manifested, if there were faith enough to draw the veil aside,

and behold what it covered! And yet, for all this, it might not be a saving advent to us. He *must* be admitted by us all, one by one, into our hearts, as well as acknowledged by the church! The lips may join, Sunday after Sunday, till the world's end, in the noble hymn, "Thou are the King of glory, O Christ!" and yet, perchance, the door of our heart may be fast closed, all the while, against his entrance there in spirit and in power. Our souls may be rebels while the lips serve Him. The thoughts and imaginations of our hearts may hold themselves erect, and refuse to be brought into subjection to Him who is the Lord and Master both of our souls and bodies.

No, brethren, it is of something more than the stones and roughnesses of the highway on which our feet tread, and which were removed when a king journeyed thereupon, that the evangelical prophet speaks! He intends it, of our heart, when he proclaims, "Make straight in the desert

a highway for our God." "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain ! And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." You understand what he means. The mountains and hills he *really* speaks of are the thoughts and wishes of men's hearts, so prideful they are, and confident ! So do they rise up, as it were, to the very heaven itself, in their folly ! They throw, in their stony hardness and loftiness, insuperable obstacles in the way of that humility which maketh all things low and level beneath the spiritual feet of Christ ! The crooked places and the rough are our sinful and rebellious doings, our errors and our blindnesses; our perverseness and untameable self-will, which fights against the truth, and loves its own winding ways, for no better reason than because, whether right or wrong, they are, at all events, of its own choosing. Men

like better to kill themselves than to be saved by Christ.

You understand, therefore, brethren, how it comes to pass, that though we *outwardly hail* the advent of Christ, we may, nevertheless, after the manner of the Jews, in deed and in truth reject him that cometh unto us. We may, in a manner, accompany Him unto Jerusalem as they did. We may join the multitude on that great day. We may cut down branches from the trees, and strew them and our own garments in the way. We may join with them that went before and that followed after, and cry aloud, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And yet, the next day, or at the same day and hour, we may *take Him* and *slay Him* whom we acknowledge to be our King!

Nay, but so it is. Though his holy body be now removed far away from us, and

though, in the midst of the glory which no man can approach unto, it be, indeed, inaccessible to the scourges and the nails which tore it upon earth, yet, in *all* that makes up the greatness of the sin, we may be guilty of it, not once only, as were the Jews, but every day of our lives. When men speak evil of that faith whereby alone we are saved, they *crucify Him*. When, by open sin, they cause men to blaspheme and speak evil things of the Holy One whose name they bear, they *crucify Him*. When they refuse to take upon their souls his light yoke, and cast off his commandments from them as a burthen, why then they *crucify Him*. Though He is in heaven they make Him bleed again. "They crucify afresh," as saith the apostle, "the Son of God." They trample under foot the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, and set at nought Him that brought them! The King is come unto his own, but, as of old, his own receive Him not.

Here, then, is the question to ask our-

selves ! Is our King come unto us in his meekness ? Are we conscious that his power has begun to work within us its infallible results, in making us like himself ? Though we may be still beset with many infirmities, yet can we truly say that we long, above all things, to *obtain* this gentle, loving, childlike spirit—that we can discern, if not the *perfection*, yet the visible presence and regular growth of it within us ? Do we remember what the apostle speaketh of, and which accompanies and flows from this gentle spirit, “ Owe no man any thing, but to love one another. For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law. If so, not only hath your King come, but He hath entered into your heart, and you have received Him into his proper palace.

Again : has He come unto you in righteousness ? Do you find that that law which

is so hateful to sinners, and against the restraint of which they struggle, as an untamed horse champs on the bit, is becoming more and more your delight? Does it appear to you like what it is, pure and beautiful and heavenly, of more worth, as it seemed to David, than gold and precious stones? Does it, in consequence, become more and more your happiness as well as your duty to obey it? And do you show forth, in the strength of this growing inward righteousness, more and more of the fruits of the Spirit? If so, again rejoice, for your Lord is come to you indeed.

Finally, do you find an increase in willingness to surrender every thing, be it what it may, to the requirements of your Master? "If any man say ought unto you," said our Lord, when he sent his disciples to loose the colt, "ye shall say, the Lord hath need of him." Do you feel and act in this spirit? When you are called to make any sacrifice, be it of time, of trouble, of substance, or a favourite habit, or

darling idol, can you say, “ It is the Lord’s command; *He hath need of me*,—He hath need of body and spirit, and of all that is within me, for his glory and for the salvation of my soul! Lord, accept it all at my hands, for I only give thee, though *it is all* I have, but a poor gift. And if it were better than it is, it is only what thou hast thyself bestowed!” If so, if this temper be, I will not say *perfected*, but growing within you, it is a blessed thing, for your Lord has come unto you, and you have opened unto Him, and He hath taken up his abode with you, and he will not depart from you.

And, to many of you, dear brethren, may I speak in the words of the apostle to the Romans, and say your salvation is nearer than at first. Nay, in one sense, to *all* of you I may say so. For even if you have slumbered and slept, and permitted the grace of God to decay within you, and forgotten your holy calling, and have not lived up to the blessed privileges which God

hath bestowed upon you, yet you have all been called by the name of Christ, all been brought to Him in baptism, and profess to rest your hope upon Him. Nay, I would fain believe, *you do* rest your hope upon that eternal rock. It is high time then to awaken out of sleep, to gird up your loins, and let your lights be burning. "For now," says St. Paul, "is your salvation *nearer* than when you believed." Every day and year, even in the youngest among you, has only brought you *nearer and nearer* to the Lord's coming. Every day is a step in advance towards that eternal world whither from the first hour of our birth we are incessantly travelling. Since I have been among you, I have watched children grow into manhood and womanhood. *They* have grown *grey*, who had no mark of age when I first beheld them. Many grey heads have I seen laid in the grave! Do you not see and feel that we are all in motion, moving, moving, moving; and at last, (so rapidly the end seems to

come,) rushing, falling headlong into the unfathomable eternity for which we were born.

Put away then from you the works of darkness, and put on the whole armour of light! Let us live as children of the light, diligently, holily, like men who wait for the coming of their Lord, and know not whether he will come at the first, second, or fourth watch. We are only sure that come He will, *and that quickly*, and that it will be woe to that servant who shall not be found watching. Yes, walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Remember that all our life is a preparation to meet the Lord. We labour for it, we suffer for it, we fast for it, we pray for it, we renounce the world for it. We grow in grace for it, and we are ever *watching* for it. We know indeed that

there is much of sinfulness about us. The infirm nature which we wear will dash the faith of the saints themselves with coldness and hesitation, and mix their hopes with trembling ! For who shall abide the day of the Lord's coming, and who shall stand when the Lord appeareth ? Yet do all those who love his appearing look forward, on the whole, with a sweet and peaceful confidence, to the time, when it shall be sounded in their ears, " Behold ! the Lord cometh ! Go ye forth to meet Him !" And the dead shall be raised, and the quick shall be changed, and the heavens shall be opened, and the trump of the archangel shall sound through heaven and earth in the ears of all flesh, and the Judge and King shall appear with his reward in his hand !

Thus, therefore, the Christian reckons that he *lives* for the day of the Lord's appearing ! and the nearer it comes, the happier he is. He does not look with fear and almost horror, on the stealing away

of one year after another, and say, “ I am so much nearer darkness, and the worm, and the sad home where all the living are gathered. I am departing more and more from life, and draw nearer unto death. Alas ! would that I might recall the years that are past ! O that I could fly back from the grave ! ” And yet, alas ! how many think or say thus ! No ! but he says, “ I am drawing nearer and nearer to the end of my pilgrimage. The crown of glory is being made ready for me, and the time of my departure to be with Christ is now at hand ! The years of my trial which I once thought so long are passed over my head like a dream. It was but the other day that I *was a child*,—that I was born. And now I am on the point of entering upon that eternal home which has been made ready for me from the foundation of the world ; the land where there is neither sun nor moon, but the countenance of God is instead of the sun ; where there is neither sorrow nor crying ; where the wicked cease

from troubling, and where the weary are at rest ! I see already in the distance the bright towers of the heavenly Jerusalem, and Christ beckons me to enter into my inheritance."

What a day of rejoicing that will be, brethren, when I and you, as I hope and pray, and all that multitude of saints which no man can number, shall take our crowns on our heads, and the palms of victory in our hands, and accompany our Lord after the judgment is finished to Mount Zion the city of the living God ! What infinite transport will fill our hearts, when the angels shall sing, as we draw nigh to the gates thereof, " Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in !" How joyfully shall we sing, amidst those hallelujahs which are never to end any more, " Hosanna to the son of David, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosannah in the highest. Amen.

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility. That, in the last day, when He shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

SERMON IV.

LUKE ii. 15.—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.”

THERE is something very striking in the whole manner in which the announcement of Christ’s coming upon earth is made, and yet, at the same time, not in harmony, perhaps, with our first and natural expectation. Had we invented the circumstances, we should have arranged them differently. When we consider, for instance, that it was not only the greatest event which had ever happened in the universe at large, since it rose out of nothing until now; but to this sin-darkened portion of it, in which God has placed *us*, of the most

vital and direct importance, altogether startling and overwhelming;—a louder and more general proclamation of it, from the very first, might seem more suitable. Surely it was strange that the Maker and upholder of all things, the Lord and giver of life, should have come down from heaven, and have been dwelling, in the fulness of his divine attributes, in the midst of his creatures, and yet none of them have been conscious of the majestic stranger! Christ lay on his mother's bosom, and yet the whole earth slumbered and slept, and darkness lay upon it as of old. Though all things had in a moment become new, yet the nations and peoples, to the world's end, were unaware of any change in nature or grace. Yet heaven, yea, the very heaven of heavens, had come down to earth, and He that filleth eternity had become flesh.

But then, in another view of it, it is *not marvellous* that man should have been thus unconscious of the descended Godhead. For had it not always been so? is

it not so *now*, and ever will be, till the change shall come that will restore all things here to the pattern of things in heaven! Surely God hath always been dwelling among men, going in and out among them, and they perceive Him not. Yea, not only hath He from the beginning shone upon them in his eternal power and Godhead, while the stars in the firmament have audibly sung of Him in their courses, but in many an act of daily love and bounty, hath He shown his fatherly care. Yea, more than that, not only *about* them, but *in* them, in the depths of the heart, where none but *He* can penetrate the secret spirit, hath he ever spoken in a still but intelligible voice. Yet all the time men have never thought of Him, nor been conscious of his presence who filleth and up-holdeth all things. No wonder, therefore, that his tabernacling in the flesh, and in the limits of a human form, should not have wakened them to a keener consciousness of his presence.

Nor, indeed, would it, or could it have done so, even if the whole earth *had* been startled at once by the sound of a trumpet, such as shall be heard on the judgment day. No, not even if a light from heaven had shone round about all men, and the voice of an archangel had proclaimed in all ears, that the hour of salvation had arrived, and that God had descended upon the earth ! Of course, men would have wondered for a moment, and would have talked of this strange interruption of nature, and mused upon it for a little while, and then there would have been an end of it. But no *outward glory, or sign of power* whatsoever could have wrought the intended *work* of redemption. And *glories and signs of power* enough, if that were of any use, there have ever been in the heaven above, and in the earth beneath. But it was the *heart* and the *soul* which were to be converted to the Lord, and not the eyes dazzled and the senses shaken.

And when the time came that the tidings of God in the flesh were to be proclaimed from one end of the earth to another, it was done in a form, much less stupendous, yet much better fitted for its divine purpose, and to the nature of man! It came to the nations, not unaccompanied indeed by signs and wonders, but breathed from the lips of men who were of like fashion and passions as themselves, and, who, in the love and manifold graces which shone round about them, were living monuments both of the mercy and the power which they proclaimed. He who knows what is in man moulded his dispensation to his creatures' wants and infirmities. And thus the coming of the Lord went to the heart of the nations, and his elect every where received Him that was promised. But in the mean while many years were to pass, and many things were to be done, before the God-man was *ready thus* to be proclaimed. Nay, so long a time was to elapse, before his showing forth even to

Israel, that the glorious apparition upon the hills of Bethlehem, and the heavenly song, and the star that came from the east and stood over where the young child was, and the wise men with their mysterious greeting and kingly offerings, had become almost a mere tradition and tale of other days. Where lingered the Redeemer all this time, while the world was ripe in sin? In what darkness did he tarry, long after holy Simeon had departed in peace, and his eyes had beheld the light that was to lighten the Gentiles? There interposed more than thirty years between this, and the anointing by the Spirit on the banks of the Jordan with the voice that proclaimed, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord! Make straight in the desert a high way for our God.”

The world, indeed, required a divine teaching; a setting forth of the law that was the counterpart of Sinai, and to be written in the heart. But *this was given during his actual ministry!* There lacked

to mankind more than this, even a living, breathing example, brought down to our comprehension, and awakening our common sympathies, wherein should be mirrored for our following the outward actings and affections of the heavenly life. *This too was given to us during his ministry.* The justice of Almighty God required a sacrifice for sin, the just for the unjust, the precious blood of the spotless Lamb whereby sin might be washed away. The glory of redemption, and the faith of men required that there should be a sign that the burning wrath had passed away, that the grave was indeed spoiled and death conquered, and that He who promised to save others had had the power and the will to deliver himself from the enemy! Well, both these mighty objects were accomplished by the *death upon the cross, and the resurrection from the grave.* All this occupied scarce three years. Why, then, should our Lord have dwelt upon earth so long, living in obscurity, acting neither

as a prophet, nor worker of miracles,—useless so to say? Why should he not have descended a full-grown man, in the ripeness of power and strength, upon the banks of the Jordan, where his forerunner had proclaimed his coming, and men's hearts were burning within them, and musing upon Him who should redeem Israel? Or, at all events, if He sprung not at once to manhood, why were not his infancy and youth surrounded by the same pomp and glory of miracle which shone about his manhood, breaking forth uncontrollably, through the fleshly veil, out of the mighty God within? Why, it is not for us, brethren, to penetrate into all the *mystery of God manifest* in the flesh. For, on every side, when we fairly examine it, and strive to understand it in its causes and relations, the more profound and impenetrable is the darkness. Therefore, even if we could not explain it, it were no wonder!

But we *may* discern, notwithstanding, quite enough of the ways of God in this

matter, to edify our souls, and to give to candid inquirers a reason for the faith that is in us. It was the will of God that our fallen souls should be redeemed; and redeemed by that consecration and perfection joined to the atoning sacrifice, which the union with it of the second Person in the ever blessed Trinity should bestow upon our renovated nature. Man indeed has fallen, but *man* has recovered his lost estate. Man hath sinned, but hath become holy. Man hath been conquered by Satan, but hath prevailed in his turn. Man was banished, and an outcast upon earth. But he hath regained his proper seat, and dwelleth again in the heavenly places. All the work of redemption is accomplished by the divine Man! But **PERFECT** man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting, the second Adam could not have been, had he not passed through every stage of that mortal existence to which the will of God hath subjected us.

How it may be in other orders of crea-

tures, we know not, but with *us* the fulness of our nature and inward and outward being comes of a most slow and gradual growth. The progress of the plant and the flower from the seed to the stem and the leaf and the blossom, is not more regular, though far less marvellous. You see it yourselves! What a difference between the unconscious babe, hanging upon its mother's breast, an utter stranger in a new world, miserably helpless, and dependent on the love and watchfulness of others, and the grown man, with limbs of iron and eye of fire, battling with danger and difficulties as a delight, and exulting in the perfection of his strength? And then the *blank* of the *infant's mind*; nothing, nothing,—*no thought*, no apprehension. Compare it with the mind, enriched with knowledge, glancing from the present to the past and the future, searching out the secrets of the great deep, passing the bounds of space and of time, and, though in a mortal tabernacle, yet

dwelling already in Heaven ! How different ! and yet the same. And all *this* is *folded* up in a *child*, inferior, in some points, to the very beasts that perish, yet with the image of God inwardly stamped upon it, and fitted to grow hereafter, if God will, into the strength and glory of an archangel ! What a *mystery it is !* yet to us it is a *blessed* mystery.

Blessed it is even upon earth ! For from this utter helplessness, and the love which has beamed into our hearts from a mother's eye, and folded us with a mother's care, and laboured for us with a mother's quiet and long-suffering ministrations, comes into human hearts a great deal of what is best and purest upon earth. Blessed too is it with a view to our Father which is in heaven ! For thus do we become acquainted with a parent's love, and the unspeakable depths of a parent's tenderness ! And the child, at his mother's knee, already reads, and learns, and feels, in the love that comes down upon him from her

eyes as from heaven, the meaning of that divine affection, the affection of Him who sitteth in the heaven of heavens, to which she directs his folded hands and lisping prayer ! Blessed, too, it is in another way ! that it teaches *us*, *how the heart, and mind, and body grow from strength to strength and glory to glory*, even here. And therefore it sets before our eyes a practical proof of that eternal and never-ending expansion in holiness, in knowledge, and in bliss, which shall be the lot of God's children by adoption and grace, when they shall behold Him face to face ! Therefore, did Christ, the very reflection of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, not merely become a man, wearing flesh and blood and pining under pains and infirmities, but a little *child*, yea, *an infant*. He was in all things like unto us, sin only excepted ; that we might in all things love and cherish Him, flesh of our flesh, and yet the King of kings ! Behold ! the Lord himself shall give you a sign.

“Behold! a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name *Immanuel!*”

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God!*”

Flesh and blood, you see, was this holy Infant, and drawing human milk, but such as babe of man never was, or is, or can be, without spot or stain of sin, no, not so much as the smallest seed within out of which evil might sprout. “Behold! unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.” Here was the Godhead, mortal and God, finite and infinite, both in one! Well might the angel say to Mary, “Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women!” Well might Elizabeth say unto the Virgin, Blessed art thou among women, and

blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Well might Mary say of herself, " My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden, for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Well might the angel say to the shepherd, " I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all people, for there is born unto you this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And they went and looked, and, cradled in his mother's arms they saw *Him* whom the heaven and heavens cannot contain, and they worshipped Him in a rude cave, who, at the same time, was seated high above principalities and powers, in majesty and light unapproachable. They bent over Him as a helpless babe; Him whose counsels stretched out the heavens, and whose arms laid in the mighty deep the foundations of the earth! " *What a mystery!*"

how deep ! how humbling ! how incomprehensible ! yet how certain ! and infinite in blessings ! Out of that infancy life and light and redemption spring! That fountain shall become a sea. Floods of grace and love shall issue from it, which shall turn the barren places into a garden, and the very wilderness shall blossom as a rose ! The Lord hath done the great thing that He hath promised, and hath become man ! The rest will follow in the fulness of the times ! *The Sun is risen.* The righteousness and healing that He beareth on his wings will soon be spread from one end of heaven to the other. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.” “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” “Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, goodwill

towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty!"

In thus coming upon earth as an infant, therefore, there was, I need not say, an unutterable condescension. But yet it was not in *this* that lay the *greatest of the shames and degradations*, inseparable from human nature, which the Lord took upon Him. The infirmities of infancy are, in some sort, the most tolerable of the ills of flesh and blood. They spoke, and *speak*, less than others do, of the *sin* of the fallen race, and the visible vengeance of Almighty God. Therefore it is, as every one must have observed, who has read with any thing like a holy interest the life of our blessed Lord, that He speaks so tenderly, and with such a yearning sympathy, of infants, and what is not far separate from them, of *young children* hardly out of their mother's arms and with the mother's milk

still on their lips. *Again and again* He sets a child in the midst of his apostles: “Unless ye be converted and *become as little children*, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Be it pride that he wished to rebuke, or deliberate sin, it is still the same. Be ye as little children! How different from the feeling of his disciples, who yet *meant* no ill, but only followed the natural impulse of any heart which is not fully opened and softened by a sense of Christ’s love, and the graces which attract it.

“And they brought young children to Christ, that He should embrace them. And his disciples *rebuked* those that brought them.” Doubtless they said, “Why should you trouble the Master? He who is anointed with the Spirit from on high, and whose thoughts are of noble things,—like the thoughts of a king,—bent on the redemption of Israel and the salvation of his people, cannot stoop so low as this! And besides, what good can his

blessing do to infants like these, who have no sense or understanding to profit by it?" So they thought, as many may think now, and they reasoned no doubt in their hearts, in a way which seemed to them quite to justify the rebuke. But they thought not the thoughts of the Pure and Holy One, who had been Himself a child, and had rested so long near a mother's heart that He saw and knew the love therein. He who hath not put in vain into the breast of parents the longing that God would bless the helpless ones whom He hath given them, and who asketh, as the condition of his salvation, not knowledge or strength of intellect, but a *submissive, simple, trusting love*, not only *answered them*, but *rebuked them*. "He was much displeased," say the Scriptures. "Suffer the little children to come unto me," He said, "and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven! Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, *he shall not enter* therein. And He

took them up in his *arms*, *He put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*"

Therefore have we no fear, when we bring our infants to Him in holy baptism, but that He will listen to our prayer. We are sure, that having taken all our nature upon Him, He will bless *them* who are as He once was, the stain of original sin only excepted. We are as *sure* as if we *saw* *Him* standing in the midst of us, that He takes them in his everlasting arms. We are as sure as if we heard his very voice speaking in its earthly accents, that He still rebukes them who, in carnal unbelief, are fain to keep the helpless innocents from Him! He says still, out of heaven, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." "Yes, blessed Lord, we *will* bring them in *faith and in love*, and we will put them into thine arms, and thou wilt stoop from heaven and bless them. Thou that wast a child in the arms of the Virgin Mary thy mother, art the Lord and Saviour of these little ones."

In one word, dear brethren, not only is *human nature*, when purified by the Spirit, henceforth become holy, and the image of the God-man stamped upon it, but Infancy especially. It must not only be loved, for what parent can help loving it? not only cherished and protected, for what heart, not of iron, can help doing so?—but it ought to *be reverenced*. It is henceforth *holy*—nay, heavenly, for Christ has worn it, and blessed it. A sacred mystery is in it. Be watchful over it, brethren, if God hath committed it to your charge. Be very tender of it, and not only bring it to Christ, but allow it not to leave Him; feed and cherish it with Christ's word and ordinances, and let not the sign of the cross wear away from the consecrated forehead of Christ's little ones. For He wills not that so much as one of his little ones should perish. Nay, their angels do behold the face of their Father which is in heaven! Glory be to God in the highest, for this, as for all his blessings!

But while there is something in this season, and specially in the commemoration of our Lord's birth, and *his cradle at Bethlehem*, which leads us naturally into this train of thought, and the blessing He hath brought on infancy, yet let us not so dwell on this, or any point of God's counsels, as to forget, what is of most importance, its practical connection with *our own salvation!* We have seen that our Lord's birth was in *secret*. The *world knew not of it*, and its multitudinous voices shouted not, “The Deliverer is come, and we are saved ! O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?” And so it is *now*. Albeit it has been proclaimed from one end of the earth to the other, though it is recorded in histories, and preached in sermons, and professed in a thousand ways, yet many and many are those whose hearts know not that a *Saviour is born*, and a Redeemer given from *death and sin*. Though our infancy received his blessing, yet our manhood remains far from Him.

And nothing, perhaps, lingers behind but broken promises, dishonoured professions, and a curse instead of a blessing.

Is Christ, then, *born to us?* .not born eighteen hundred years ago, but anew and afresh in our souls? It was not without reason, you may be sure, that He was announced to *these humble shepherds*. They were *waiting for Israel's salvation*. They had faith. They had love. Have *we* faith and love? Are *we* longing for that deliverance from sin and death which God hath promised from the beginning? Do *we* desire to taste and see God's salvation, so that we may depart in peace like holy Simeon? Are *we* watching upon the mountains, and looking up to heaven, whence cometh our help? If so, it is *not* and it will not be in vain. Though it be gloom and darkness unto others, yet *for us* there shall shine a light from heaven, even the glory of the Lord upon our hearts. It shall not be as an idle tale to us, or a wondrous story of ancient days. But it

shall be as it hath been to the saints from the beginning, a *true* and *real* thing, of which we shall know, as we know of other things, by our *own experience*. The bondage of the soul shall be unloosed, the weight of unforgiven sin shall be taken off, and we shall acknowledge Him who was born as at this season, for our Lord and perfect Saviour; we shall rejoice with an exceeding great joy. We shall rejoice, not only that He hath been born, but that He hath grown up into the fulness of *the stature of the Man-God*. We shall rejoice that He hath not only pined and hungered for us, and spake and done as never man spake or did, but that he *hath died* for us ! We shall rejoice that, in the fulness of the same manhood, He hath risen again. Yea, that He hath ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and that He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, still very God and very man ; God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the world ; man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world. *He is ours, and we are his.*

And therefore we rejoice, in the hope of the glory that shall be revealed to us, and in the knowledge that He shall come in the fulness of his majesty, with all his holy angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other !

Then shall our eyes behold the power of his atoning blood, and the blessings that shall issue out of the manhood taken into God ! Among the multitudes about the throne shall be the souls of the infants made like unto his own infancy, and who have been put into his arms, shining like stars, a multitude that no man can number.

There shall be *the young* who have lived and died in Christ, in the *likeness of his own* holy and blessed youth, in a still higher order of glory ! multitudes whom no man can number. There shall be they who in later life have been given to their Lord, who have walked in the steps of that holy manhood, and have been conformed to that heavenly image, and have

fought the good fight in the battle between the saints and the world, multitudes too which no man can number, out of every nation under heaven !

Finally, in a dazzling circle, round about . their Lord, and high above the rest, with crowns on their heads, and palms in their hands, shall be the company of the apostles and the glorious army of the martyrs, who have been baptized with their Lord's baptism, and have passed through the sword and the fire into their eternal rest. And they all, within and without, shall *be like* the Lord in his glory, as they were like Him in the days of his humiliation ! Glory to God in the highest! and on earth peace !

SERMON V.

ST. MATT. i. 21.—“And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.”

THIS appearance of God in the flesh, is a great and awful fact, into the depths of which no mind of man can penetrate, and which is proposed to us, not for our examination or idle inquiry, but for our adoration. Probably in the whole history of the universe,—from the moment that God issued out of his eternal rest to make the worlds by the word of his power, until now—this is the most wonderful event which has ever occurred.—At least, we are

told, that it is one, into whose mysteries the very angels themselves, whose faculties are mighty, and who have witnessed God's doings for many thousand years, are ever longing to look; though doubtless, *they* do comprehend many things in this great event which are utter darkness to our feebler thoughts. But it is clear from this and other expressions in Holy Writ, that even *they* are incapable of exhausting the wonder which it contains. They cannot foresee all the ultimate results of it, or discern all the reasons which have moved the Highest, and Best, and Wisest, thus to deal with man!

And I say, to deal with *man*, not because the effects of the Word's incarnation may not, and do not, in many ways which we know not of, redound upon the angels themselves, and the intelligent creatures of God in other parts of the universe! But because, however this may be, and however unfathomable in many respects it is, yet, the practical results to us on earth are

a very plain and intelligible thing ! And whatever may be the case with blessed spirits in heaven, to whom divine things, and the harmony of God's counsels, may be revealed for the *pleasure of contemplating them*, the point in which they *concern us* in this earthly trial is wholly practical. It is the way in which they influence the actual daily relation of our souls to God, and the *duties* we have to perform in consequence of them, on which salvation depends !

But, then, what we have *to do*, and what we *can do*, greatly depends on the notions we form of ourselves ; of the nature of the faculties which God has given to us, and the end for which we are designed. And since men accomplish mighty deeds, for no other reason, sometimes, than because they think that they *are born* and formed for great things, *therefore* I would fain draw your thoughts to-day to the results of Christ's incarnation upon your own dignity among God's creatures. I would fain, by God's grace, make you feel and

acknowledge, that you are made by the gospel a glorious part of God's creation ! I believe this spiritual dignity, when rightly conceived, to be a mighty spring of holy action, and a delightful encouragement to the service of God. Teach men to think meanly of their nature, and their daily acts will savour of that meanness. Make them to count themselves but dust and ashes, and, like the serpent, you will see them *eat dust*, and crawl upon the ground all the days of their life. But may we be reserved for better things !

Certainly, this must strike any one capable of thinking—in reading the account of the incarnation of the Son of God—that being able to take upon himself the *nature* of angels, and even then to stoop unspeakably from his Godhead, he yet chose, what to our finite thoughts is far inferior, the nature of man. He selected that form of flesh and blood with the immortal spirit combined with it, in which I and you are fashioned, rather than that of

the Cherubim and Seraphim! And this is not a transient assumption. It is not a taking unto himself an inferior nature, and then laying it aside again, when the temporary purpose is answered. God and man, on the contrary, are indissolubly and eternally united in the person of Christ Jesus. And throughout the unceasing ages which have yet to roll, and which will roll on for evermore, He that sitteth on the throne at the Father's right hand, will still be He that was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin's womb, and was laid in the manger at Bethlehem. God and man, once joined, cannot be put asunder.

Nor, again, was this nature which God took into his own, in this his time of humiliation, a *mere general resemblance* to man. It did not in *some points only* touch us, and in others rise far and far above us, and out of our reach, and therefore, not concerning us, make all imitation useless. On the contrary, it was *the very same nature*, its perversion by sin excepted. The

same perishable body it was, with its aches, and pains, and wants, and manifold infirmities—hungering, thirsting, suffering, fainting, dying. The same heart it was which is within *our* bosoms—hoping, *fearing, sorrowing, rejoicing*, with depths of feeling, and capacities of woe and bliss, beyond our fathoming. The same mind, thinking, reflecting ; and with that marvellous faculty which refuses to be imprisoned in the present moment, looking before and behind, reasoning and inferring one thing from another as we do. The same soul it was, framed not of matter, such as the brute earth is fashioned of, but of some inconceivable essence, indivisible, imperishable by anything but the destroying hand and will of God himself. It was the same growth alike of mind and body, expanding with years, growing in stature and wisdom. He was subject, moreover, to the same restraints, and relations to social and civil life ; to the government of father and mother, the laws and

customs of his country, and all those outward obligations of settled society, in the middle of which we all are born. In one word, He *was very* man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary his mother.

I need hardly tell you, I hope, how necessary it is, not only for everlasting salvation, but for an adequate impression upon our minds of our inseparable and mysterious connection with the Son of God, distinctly to feel and understand this,—clearly to discern the Lord's manhood. We cannot feel Christ to be in *us*, as our principle of life, unless we first discern *ourselves* in Him ! And in what a marvellous contact with the Highest, and ineffable communion do we then perceive ourselves to be ; our nature one *with God*, and God, therefore, through Christ, one with us. So that well might the Child that was born in Bethlehem, be called by the prophet,—*Wonderful*—a wonder, in which all other marvels are swallowed up. It is as high as heaven, who can attain it ? as deep as the sea, who

can fathom it? as large as infinity, who can compass it?—He is Counsellor, even He who by his hand formed the worlds, and by a scheme, which either to frame or to accomplish lay far beyond the grasp of created intelligence, worked out an everlasting redemption for the world which the self-will of the creature had marred. He is the mighty God,—and, therefore, while He *touches* us, on the side of the nature which he took upon himself, and the heavenly graces which it is capable of receiving, yet *here* He is exalted beyond all height. He vindicates to himself an unspeakable majesty, and identity with the divine Substance, between which, and the most exalted of them who are washed by his blood, there lies an impassable gulf. He is the Prince of peace! He has made peace between man and his own soul, hitherto torn and rent asunder by its own disordered self,—peace between mercy and justice, hitherto opposed one to another—peace between heaven and earth, and man

and God ! Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace.

This human nature, then, the combination of which with the Divine Essence in Christ's person, is the instrument of reconciliation, is capable in all its appropriate qualities and faculties of a moral union with God even in us. Or else, Christ the Lord is not *our representative*. Nor is there any meaning in that unspeakable hallowing of our common nature in Him, which is held forth as an example. But what a thought this is ! that we should be capable of thus drawing nigh unto Him who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is holy ! So that there shall be an *image of Him* in ourselves ! So that the *perfection* of the adorable Godhead shall, within the measures of a creature, be discernible in man. We thus become not only *temples* of the Holy Ghost, but even something more. For He doth not only *dwell within us*, as a man may dwell within a house, yet makes it not of his own nature, nor a part,

in any sense, of himself. But he does more. By thus dwelling, the Spirit of Christ transforms and glorifies us by the power which worketh in us, and will work in us eternally. And from this resemblance in holiness, will come, by an inseparable connexion with Him who is the "Holy One," that which is only absent, where the moral perfections of God are absent,—even bliss and glory! There will come, in due time, *our* measure of that majesty, and of that light wherewith God clothes himself as with a garment. For *in the course of nature*, when the day of resurrection shall arrive, it shall invest the bodies of the saints.

There cometh already, by way of earnest, that inward joy, and peace, and love, that harmony of the soul with God, which in their perfection *are heaven*, and unto the full stature of which we are growing even upon earth. Finally, there will come an enlargement of wisdom! There shall be a growing of the mind and thoughts within

us, unto all eternity, as more and more revelations are made to us of the works of our heavenly Father, and we are endowed with more and more faculties to comprehend and to adore them. All this is certain,—and is it not a noble destiny? In what, in fact, is a nature, designed, as is ours, for a condition so exalted, and to the growth of which, as eternity shall proceed, no limitation can be placed, inferior to that of the angels themselves? To know God, to be like to God, to love God, to serve and worship God; these, even in the highest ranks of those heavenly armies, must still constitute their perfection, and their happiness, as they do ours. There is no distinction!

“But *we* are in a state of trial,” it may be answered. “*We* may fail of our reward. We may lose the divine image, and become like unto them that perish.” So we may, certainly,—while the blessed angels, surrounded and held in by the glory and holiness of the Highest within and without

them, cannot forfeit their heavenly estate. But still this constitutes no real difference between us, if we look at the whole case. For it is plain from scripture, that, albeit *now*, no change can approach them, and they can never fall, but dwell for ever in God's presence ; yet time has been, when they *too* had their temptations, and their trials, and their dangers. For, had it not been possible for them to sin and fall, that great company of them, who are now *our* enemies and God's, and are liars and murderers, instead of blessed spirits, would never have forfeited their glory and their inheritance in light. No; it may not be, perhaps, at all too bold a thing to say, that out of all those innumerable multitudes who serve God in heaven, there is no one whose obedience has not been *tried*. Perhaps, for aught we know to the contrary, they may have dwelt, originally, in tabernacles of clay, like ourselves. They may have been changed from power to power, and glory to glory, only by degrees,

as their trial ended. Just as Adam might have put off his mortality, and had his corruptible flesh absorbed, without pain or death, into incorruption, had he not broken the covenant of life.

Nor again, in another most important point, is *our seeming inferiority* an inferiority in deed and in truth. I mean, we are not less than the angels, because we have, every now and then, sharp and painful struggles to undergo. We are not lower than they, because our love for our heavenly Father is exhibited, if it be exhibited at all, by a manful resistance to sorrows and trials, grievous not only to flesh and blood, but to any creature sensible of pain and pleasure. Nay, it may with truth be said, that there is something *higher and better*, in a moral sense, in this severe warfare ! Something greater there is in it than in the travelling to and fro in God's service, and a sinless obedience to his will, in a condition exempt from danger and amidst the unutterable glories of the hea-

venly vision. Look at a saint submitting to God's will, and, with heart pierced by affliction as with a sword, bowing his head, and saying, "Lord! not my will but thine be done." Look at a martyr rejoicing in the flames! Look at an apostle carrying the word of life to the world's end, amidst the scoffs and scorn of men, as though, instead of being an image of God, he were in their eyes a worm, and *no man!* Surely these are more elevating spectacles of the power of God, than they who excel in strength, and are in the actual enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints in light. The soldier, in the middle of the battle, and with his garments rolled in blood, stirs the breast more, and kindles a higher admiration, than when he rests from his labours, and is crowned with his laurel.

Certainly, however *we* may fall short ourselves in following Him, the *special glory* of the great Captain of our salvation lay in this submission to the will of God, amidst pains, and outrages, and injuries, of

which the sorrows of them who in faith have come after him are but faint images. It was not his *degradation*, but his exaltation. It was his exceeding great glory that he was thus made under the law, and drank, in *filial* obedience, that terrible cup, of which the wine was red, and full mixed with the wrath of God and the gall of suffering ! Therefore, *because* he fought and conquered, suffered and endured, hath God highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that should be above every name—that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. No ; He hath *consecrated sorrow* ! He hath made grief, borne in the love of God, and for faith's sake, a divine thing, and above the angels.

Hence, no doubt, comes a part of that tenderness with which those blessed spirits look down upon them who are living in faith and fear, and fighting, against the world the flesh and the devil, the battle of God.

Hence, they rejoice to minister unto Christ's elect ! They are our fellow-servants, and have a brotherly feeling for us ! They disclaim any superiority over us, or right to our worship and adoration. They are but citizens of the same heavenly country, and will be our companions and our friends hereafter. " And I fell at his feet to worship him," says St. John, of the great angel in the Revelation ; " and he said unto me, See that thou do it not. I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus."

But, then, it may be replied, " you forget that the angels serve God, and do his holy will. Whilst men upon earth are wayward and disobedient, and despise Him before whom the blessed spirits veil their faces ; and disobey Him who hath made them, and is Lord of heaven and earth." And true it is, that such is the case ; and miserably true, therefore, it is, that the *mere corrupted nature* of man, and they who live according to it, is, indeed *far, far be-*

low the nature of the angels. Nay, it is the very opposite to it, and falleth downward towards the realm of darkness, even as theirs riseth towards the light wherein God dwells. And what marks it bears, in this its degradation, of a heavenly original, and of divine capacities, only make the darkness that is in it the darker, and the depth of its fall a more awful abyss ! But I am speaking all along not of human nature *unregenerated* ! I speak of the same nature renewed, and purified, and taken into sonship ! I speak of it, albeit beset with sins and infirmities, yet with the name of God written upon it afresh, and animated with the spirit of life. As the Christian's soul is perfected, any differences which remain, are differences not of kind, *but of degree* only. And they fade away, rapidly, from the soul of the glorified saint. The perishable body matters little ! It need not be taken into the account. Christ was God, infinite, holy, and omnipotent, albeit tabernacling

in dust and ashes ; the soul of the servant of Christ, therefore, when it has become ripe for glory, is not less an angel, because it is yet clothed in flesh. Any how, it will soon be clothed upon with the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and then the equality will be complete.

No, brethren ; when you come to think, and examine the question, the only degradation is *sin*. This, *not sorrow, or trial, or death*, is the true shame of the sons of Adam. This is their badge of inferiority to the great and blessed beings who serve day and night in the temple, and people the paradise of God. Human nature was and is below the angels, because it hath fallen from obedience to its Almighty Maker, and therefore ceased to be united with Him. Why it pleased not God to raise anew the nature of the fallen angels, we know not. But, it *has* pleased Him to raise, and renew ours in his adorable Son. For reasons known to God, sin in *them* is unforgiven, and no

way left for repentance. It is not so with us. There is *forgiveness*. There is *mercy*. There is *redemption*. And observe how profoundly the mind of our holy God, and the inseparable connection which he hath instituted between sin and our degradation and misery, pervades the promises of salvation. It is not “the Redeemer is come, and he shall set you free from pain and sorrow, from the dying body, and the tormented mind. Rejoice and be glad, for henceforth, all tears shall be wiped away from all faces, and death shall be swallowed up in victory!” All this, indeed, *is* true. And very beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messengers who bring such tidings. But it is not the master truth of all, it depends upon *something else*. Another deliverance must be first wrought, from which, as a matter of course, all the rest will follow. The Deliverer, who is come, is a deliverer from *sin*; and his name, is called Jesus, because he shall *save his people from their*

sins. “Fear not,” said the angel unto Joseph, “fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name *Jesus*, for he *shall save his people from their sins.*” “But when the fulness of time was come,” saith St. Paul, “God sent forth his Son, made *of a woman*, made under the law that we might receive the *adoption of sons;*” that sonship which sin had marred, making us children, not of God, but of Satan.

Behold, then, the goodness of God, and the decisive mark of our exaltation, under the Gospel covenant. It is not merely that we are freed from the curse of the law, though that were a mighty blessing. It is not merely that, being gathered anew under the government of God, we have strength given us to obey his laws, and to receive the reward, which the Almighty King is pleased to bestow upon his obedient subjects, and faithful servants.

Though this, too, had been a glorious thing in itself! Nay, to have been the *servants* to wait upon his throne, and have drawn near, with reverent hearts, and bended knees, to the skirts of his glory, had been an exaltation as much beyond our thoughts, as beyond all desert of a creature. But adore the goodness of Him who is indeed *love*. He is not content, unless he makes us *children*; unless he takes us into his arms, as a tender Father, and admits us to the light of his countenance; and He tempers the awfulness of his majesty, and takes the burden of the terror from our *own* hearts, by breathing into us the spirit of love, the *earnest* of the boundless affection which is in Him, towards his redeemed creatures. “And because ye are sons,” saith the Apostle, “God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more *a servant*, *but a son*. And, if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Could it have entered into man’s heart to con-

ceive such a love as this? Certainly not; and as little can it enter into men's hearts, to *feel it*, and to *realize this their sonship* by adoption and grace, unless the powerful Spirit of Christ shall change them, and give them this earnest of the coming glory, and the heavenly kingdom.

Yet, I fear me, that many, many Christians have it not. Though this *feeling of sonship* whereby we cry, "Abba, Father," is the blessed privilege of them whom Christ hath redeemed; and though, in the living energy of a holy life, it be the only evidence that he is indeed to us, Immanuel,—God with us, and *God in us*,—I fear that the very thought of it is to many, a thought not of joy, but of pain. The heart turns sick at it. The mind abhors it. It brings us too *near to God*. It puts us in too close a contact with the pure, and holy, and heart-searching One, to please the natural heart, to which Christ hath not yet been made, in deed and in truth, a deliverer from sin. We had rather *be farther*

off. We are not *loving children*,—this is the truth. God is not our very Father. We rejoice not in his presence, the light of his countenance is not our joy and our life. Alas ! if such be the case, with any of us ! They have not yet, with the full heart of faith, laid hold on the eternal Son, *God and man !* They apprehend not in their souls, the blessed mystery of God manifest in the flesh ; or from the fulness of that eternal and ineffable sonship, they would have drawn the assurance of their own, and manifested forth its power ! Nay, if men dread so great a privilege, and feel as though they *dare* not assume it, *fearing* God only, not loving Him, and under the bondage of the law, I would say to them with Saint Paul ; “ The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage, under the elements of the world.

But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son,—that we might receive the *adoption of sons.*"

Believe me, brethren, not to accept our privileges, not to embrace the tokens of God's love, is not a mark of christian humility; but a remnant of our unregenerate state, and of the evil heart of unbelief.

So marvellously hath God contrived, in making his Son *manifest in the flesh* the sole base and centre of all our greatness and glory. The more exquisite the sense therefore we have of our present adoption, through the Spirit that day by day reneweth us, and of our final inheritance, the profounder grows our humility, and the conviction of our *entire dependence* upon Him that made us. And I mention this, because this *soul-deep feeling* of dependence upon Him that sustaineth all things, and is the life of *spirits* which live but in Him, is eminently a work of grace. Usually, the more full of joy or vigour a man is, the less he feels dependent. To

be full of life and hope—to overflow with energies of thought, of heart, of action,—to enjoy the full feeling of Christian life and hope, might tend, you would think, to a sense of liberty and *self-confidence*. Why, ask yourselves; and you will confess, that even the common consciousness of health and strength, *tends* to make you rest on yourselves, as though the fountain of both were *in* yourselves. But look at the power of God, in those to whom the Son hath given life! They who are most full of graces, who most abound in hopes and joys, and in whom the springs of holy action are most exhaustless and indefatigable, find all their strength, in *their weakness*. “Not I,” saith the apostle, “but *Christ* that *liveth in me*.”

They rejoice in their *sonship*. But that is inseparable from the *sonship of Christ*, in which their own inheres; and a separation from Him, is the loss of the adoption which cometh from Him alone. They rejoice in their conquest over death and hell!

They are bold in the assured hope of life everlasting. But this is only a rejoicing in Christ, who hath conquered hell for them, and who is to them that believe in him, the way, and the truth, and the life. They rejoice in freedom from sin ; from its *condemnation* and *power over them* here, and the last remnants of it hereafter. But this is only rejoicing in Him, who *knew no sin*, but who hath *been made sin* for them ; and is their justification, and sanctification, and redemption. The greater their spiritual strength, the more perfect their spiritual life, the more they rest on Christ as God and man. “I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Almighty God, who hast given us thine only-begotten Son to take our nature upon

him, and, as at this time, to be born of a pure Virgin; grant that we, being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, even one God, world without end! Amen.

SERMON VI.

MATT. ii. 10.—“ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”

WE have had occasion to notice, *before*, the *quietness* and *silence* with which it has pleased God to bring about the greatest events for us and our souls, in the world’s history; not shaking the earth and the skies, but inaudible to the ears and invisible to the eyes of the great mass of mankind. But *to-day* I would point out something to modify this. I would dwell on the indications of the greatness of his designs, and the glimpses of glory which have, at the same time, accompanied these unobtrusive manifestations of himself

among men. He thus restores the balance, and makes up for the lack, in other respects, of outward pomp and circumstance.

And I would be understood, in thus speaking, to refer solely to the *commencement* of his great designs. In their *progress*, they become visible enough. Nay, they occupy permanently that very world which was originally unconscious of the prodigious change about to be wrought upon it. Men slept and slumbered as usual, when God incarnate was born into the world. But, since that time, the nations have worshipped Him, and the uttermost isles of the sea have done Him service.

Above all, I wish to show you, that the line of God's dealings, as afterwards unfolded, is marked by unmistakeable intimations from the very first. For instance, the birth of the Son of God in the stable of an obscure inn, is, indeed, in its earthly aspect, a low and humble thing. But join to it, the glorious vision of angels,

and the heavenly song which visited the shepherds keeping their watch by night, and to any mind which can read the meaning of a sign or symbol, the whole scene, however humble before, becomes clothed with an inexpressible beauty and majesty. He beholds God in the flesh—the reconciliation of the Maker with his creatures—the breaking down of the partition wall between heaven and earth—angels visiting men, and men raised to angels—and the storms and tumults of life succeeded by an everlasting peace. “ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.”

When future times, then, *proved* this reconciliation wrought by Christ Jesus, as *a matter of fact*, you cannot say that it *was not* announced from the first.

So again in the scripture which we have read to-day it is the same. Scarcely is the marvellous child born, and laid in swaddling-clothes, when his majesty is acknowledged. Albeit men and beasts went

in and out, without thought or reverence of that which made the cradle and the shed more glorious places than thrones and earthly palaces, there came from the ends of the earth wise men to worship Him, the unknown peasant child ! To *them*, too, as to the shepherds, is given an *outward* intimation, as well as the moving of the inward heart to follow it. The firmament,—the glorious lights of which they were accustomed to study in those lands of pure air wherein the whole sky shines out by day and night with a glory unknown to us—the very firmament, in a new and bright star, gave witness to the birth of the Great One. There were now more marvellous things in the *earth* than in the heaven itself. And so the stars in their courses guide and point to the place wherein, invested in flesh, lay He who made both them and all things else at the beginning.

And whosoever they were, whether kings, as some traditions say, or not, they

came with royal gifts. For when they knelt down before Him, in token of adoration, they presented unto Him gold—a tribute as to a king! and frankincense as unto God, to whom incense was ever offered in the temple. And lastly, they gave another precious thing, which carried with it, however, a sad meaning, though they, perhaps, discovered it not—myrrh, as to a man that should die, for it was used in those countries for embalming the bodies of the dead! The King! the God! the dying man! How marvellously is this acknowledgment bound up, and marked to the understanding eye, in the offering which they made!

But again: observe the thing *intended* by the visit from the uttermost east of these wise and kingly strangers! They represented the *Gentiles*,—the countless nations beyond the limits of the Jewish people, whom God had come in the flesh to gather unto himself, and raise over them and among them a spiritual kingdom

which should have no end or limits. The child that was *born* is thus, you see, marked out from the very first, as no king of a single tribe—no Saviour of one solitary race—but a reconciler and mingler of Jew and Gentile, of circumcision and uncircumcision, which should henceforth be *made one*; a Redeemer of *all* people, and a *universal* King! Even so, long before, had the psalmist spoken concerning Him: “His dominion shall be from one sea to another, and from the flood unto the world’s end. They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before Him; his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents. The kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts. All kings shall kneel down before Him—*all* nations shall do Him service.” And so saith the prophet Isaiah: “Arise—shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness

the people. But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and *kings* to the brightness of thy rising. The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. All they from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and incense."

You see, therefore, *all* this, which has long since come to pass to a great extent, was clearly intimated by the coming of the wise men, Gentiles from a Gentile land, to Bethlehem. They were *signs* of it. They were *themselves* the first fruits of us Gentiles.

And there is something else in the accompanying circumstances, as related by the Evangelist, which may well be considered to *foreshadow* other peculiarities attending the advent of the Just One, and the changes which He should bring upon the earth. I will notice two. 1st. We are told that when Herod the king heard

these things, he was *troubled*, and all Jerusalem with him. Is not this a sign of the shaking to the foundations of the high places of the earth, which afterwards accompanied the spread of the Gospel, as it went forth from one land to another? For thus the mighty systems of false worship and godless opinions, which were the pillars on which Satan's kingdom was built, were gradually overthrown by the preaching of the gospel. And the word of truth from the lips of the apostles was as the breath of God's nostrils, and swept away, at last, as by an overpowering tempest, the obstacles which opposed the setting up of the kingdom of Christ among men. It was in vain that kings and rulers were troubled, like wicked Herod, and cast about on all sides for weapons to destroy what rebuked their wickedness and limited their power. "Why do the heathen so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take

counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn—the Lord shall have them in derision! Desire of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance; and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces, like a potter's vessel."

And this brings me to the other point, which, as an accompaniment of the going forth of the new kingdom, is foreshown in the slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem; when Herod, disappointed by the return of the wise men to their country another way, sought to slay the young child by murdering all those of his native place. "And in Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not!" In one word, the *first coming* of Christ—his earliest mani-

festation to the Gentiles, was marked, though he was the Prince of Peace, not by *peace*, but by the sword! His very swaddling-clothes were reddened with the blood of martyrs. The babes of Bethlehem, slain because of Him, and for Him, were the first in that glorious army.

So mysteriously and marvellously, and with such a prophetic truth, are mingled together the fortunes of the first *days* of the Saviour of men! The glory and the shame,—the stable, and the songs of the heavenly host,—the rage of kings, and the blood of saints,—with the spread of his kingdom and the conversion of the Gentiles. The star and the wise men, with Herod, and his cruel men of war!

And as it was in the first manifestation, so, in a greater or less degree, has it been ever since! There has been the opposition of the world and the fury of the oppressor—sometimes grievous tortures and death to them that love the Lord! And, at the best, there has been quite

enough of chastening and sorrow on the one side, and enmity to a spiritual Saviour on the other, to mark intelligibly, that the servant must be as his lord, and seek his rest in another country, even a heavenly. There is enough to prove that the world in which the gospel is planted, and groweth up, and beareth fruit, is an ungenial soil, and ever resisteth and casteth forth from it the heavenly seed. But any how, God's will has been accomplished; and there hath been a calling into the adoption of children of those who once *were no people*, and the *manifestation* of Christ to *us* Gentiles.

And here, I cannot but remark, how difficult it is to bring home to our own hearts at all, an adequate sense of this great privilege, and wonderful mercy. And this, not so much, frequently, from the hardness of the heart, as the *weakness of the mind*. There is a *narrowness* in men's thoughts which makes it impossible for them to look beyond the sphere in

which they live, and to imagine, either themselves or the things around them, to be, in any respect, other than they are. We are born Christians, and it appears a *natural* arrangement that we should, from the first, Gentiles as we are, be admitted into all the privileges of the people of God. And yet to the saints and prophets of ancient times, this manifestation of Christ to the nations seemed a thing exceedingly marvellous, and, albeit, conveyed, from the very first, in type and prophecy, they were not able to realize it. Perhaps this came, in part, from the profounder sense which they entertained of the unspeakable *value* of God's covenanted love; and of those heavenly promises which were of more worth than gold and precious stones, and which, accordingly, like gems, they would fain treasure up, and not scatter far and wide. Whilst, now-a-days, men feel no repugnance to believing the gospel the *common* possession of all men, not because they have lofty thoughts of God's

goodness, or hearts on fire with love, but only because it is a common, *ordinary* thing in their eyes, and they do not grasp it as any special or inestimable treasure. This will explain some part of their feeling.

But over and above that, those ancient men, like us, were influenced by the times and circumstances in the midst of which they lived. They knew that the worshippers of the true God had been, from the beginning, but few in number; scattered up and down in ones and twos, and bearing no visible proportion at all to the multitudes of those who knew Him not. And when the race of Israel had been chosen and set apart by Almighty God, to put his name, and temple, and glory therein; the illumination of his spirit, and the wonders of his mercy were, for many hundreds of years together, withheld from the great company of mankind. So that it seemed a part of God's deliberate counsels, and the inflexible course of providence,

that this exclusiveness of the covenant should be unchangeably maintained! The darkness of the shadow of death covered the earth, and the souls of men were in bondage from the beginning! It was not that they *believed not*. It was not that they doubted, where they understood God's word. It was not that they lacked holy charity to expand the heart, even to the world's circumference. But it was simply that they could not *realize* so great a thing, or *conceive* this mighty revolution in the dealings of God with man.

Moreover, in spite of scattered notices, and rays of light here and there breaking in upon God's darker counsels, this preaching of the word of promise to the world's end, and the general adoption of the nations, was not yet *proclaimed*. It had not that unmistakeable *distinctness* which, after our Lord's actual coming upon earth, the rapid unfolding of the Gospel scheme, threw, in a flood of light, upon it.

And even when there was no more room

left for doubting, it is interesting to remark the *wonder* at this extension of God's unspeakable mercy, which still laid hold upon the minds and hearts of the holy men who first proclaimed the coming of Christ. "While Peter," says scripture, "yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed, were *astonished*, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Again: "When they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

You can now, therefore, understand what St. Paul means when, in the epistle for the day, he speaks of the revelation of this call of the Gentiles to him, as a wonderful and adorable thing, and the clearing up of a mystery which, from the foundation of the world, had lain hid in the inscrutable counsels of God. "Ye have heard," he says, "of the dispensation of

the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward. How that by *revelation* he made known unto me the *mystery* which, in other times, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." And you will see, in what follows, what high and glorious thoughts he entertained of that inheritance of the Lord God Almighty, in whose eternal and incomprehensible vastness only those *can* share who are his children by adoption and grace, and members of Christ's mystical body, which is the church spiritual. "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." Again, "that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make all men see what is the fellowship of the *mystery* which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things in Christ Jesus."

Before I quit this passage, let me point

out two more things in this enlargement of Christ's universal church to take in all nations, which merit your most earnest attention. In the first place, though I and you are the objects of God's love in Christ, we are not the sole objects. Nay, though He hath made us, and redeemed us, and watches over us, and plans and schemes for us, with as perfect a love and care as though He had *concentrated* upon us *alone* the attributes with which He fills immensity; yet He *hath respect*, in all that He does, for us and in us, to mightier and more glorious schemes than *we* can comprehend, and other beings beside ourselves. We, in this world, are a *very* small portion of God's rational creatures. *Our* habitation is only one out of innumerable abodes of spirits and angels, in various degrees of perfection, with which his creative hand has filled all space. And all that he hath worked, and is working, and *will* work, on earth, touching the salvation of souls, is a manifestation of his glory!

It is an exhibition of his mercy, of his justice, of all his ineffable attributes, to other creatures ; mighty spirits in heaven, who are looking on and adoring the Highest all the while, at each revelation of them. We are, as it were, in a *theatre*, and angels are the spectators. Brace up your hearts, brethren ; raise your thoughts within you to the height of your great calling, and quit you like men, who are *mere* men no longer, but men with the power of God effectually working within you. For even so it is ! You are not alone, but unseen multitudes are looking on, "To the intent," says Saint Paul, speaking of the gift of the gospel to us Gentiles, "that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God !"

And, secondly ; this spiritual kingdom in which you live, and of which you are a part,—its conditions, its results, all that concerns its establishment and final consummation, is founded on nothing variable,

or with the shadow of turning about it, but on the everlasting rock. It rests on the deliberate predetermination and eternal counsel of God. It cannot be changed, but remaineth fast for ever, though heaven and earth shall pass away. "According," saith the apostle, "to the *eternal purpose* which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." You see, therefore, into what an awful fellowship, and into how great a purpose this manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles hath called you. You see what mysteries of God are being shown forth in you. You are entangled, so to say, and shut in, in the meshes of a mighty net, the meshes of God's counsels ! And whether you will or not, you are acting a part in the development of infinite schemes, the end and mode of which we comprehend not, and on which, whether for your salvation or perdition, an innumerable company are gazing !

It behoves us to act with this solemn

thought upon our souls. There should be the deep conviction that *all* in the gospel scheme is ordered by God's predetermined counsel and foreknowledge. And therefore, every call of grace, every opportunity of edification, every means and instrument of the spiritual life are presented to us, not by chance, or hurry, or oversight, but as so many pre-arranged occasions of trial, of which God hath fixed the number and the degree, and upon our use of which our everlasting salvation depends. As He who made us hath numbered the *very hairs* of our head, so hath He settled the whole *time and order of our trial*. And whilst He hath given to us all, the power of his grace in Christ Jesus to make our calling and election sure, so hath He put a limit to his patience, and will cut down the unfruitful tree when the season of grace, which He hath prescribed unto every man, is come and gone. Watch, therefore, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

Watch and pray, lest the Lord come in a moment when ye think not of Him ! Watch and pray, lest He who spared not the natural branches, should as little spare them who are grafted in, in their stead, and so the *manifestation* of Christ to the Gentiles, should be to your destruction, and vengeance should come of it, and not the glory of the people of God.

For never let it be forgotten, that though the admission of the Gentiles into the privileges of the chosen people, throws open the gates of mercy unto all mankind, yet that, in one respect, it alters not those conditions of acceptance on which, from the foundations of the world, God hath inflexibly acted. Therefore, as of those who were called Israel, all were *not* Israel, and had but the name ; and the promises were to them but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal ; a boast and a breath, and not a reality,—so it is *now*. God hath a people in every nation under heaven, wherein the gospel has been preached.

And the names of them who are written in the book of life, and shall be among the multitudes that are around the throne, are taken out of all the ends of heaven! The manifestation of Christ hath been, and is, like the lightning! It hath shone and penetrated everywhere. But everywhere it has condemned as well as saved. Everywhere it hath been at once a savour of life and of death,—of life unto them that with their whole heart have believed,—of death unto those who have loved darkness, and though the light hath shone in the midst of them, yet have not comprehended it.

Yea, He who, as on this day, was manifested unto the Gentiles, of whom we are, is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He is in the world, and the world was made by Him, and still the world knows Him not. He still comes unto his own, but his own receive Him not. But to as many as receive Him, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, even to them that

believe on his name ; which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. What more can I say ? The same *heavenly star*, the same guiding light, that led the wise men of old, even now leadeth you. The word of God which is light, even as the perfect day, is set up on high to conduct your steps. Are you following it ? have you taken your staff in your hand, and your shoes upon your feet, and are you travelling like the wise men, whithersoever it will lead you ? As it stood over the place were the young child was, so it standeth *now*. It points to Christ. It moves not from him. All its rays shine on Him, and He it is which giveth them back tenfold ! Has the star not only shone on your eyes, but into your *heart*, and have you yielded to its guidance, and have you fallen down and worshipped the Lord ? Nay, have you taken Him into your heart, and have you offered unto Him your *precious* things,—

your gold, and frankincense, and myrrh,—
yourselves, your souls, and your bodies ?

Never mind that your hearts are, at the best, an unworthy dwelling-place for the great King ! So was the *stable*; yet, nevertheless, God incarnate dwelt, and men and holy angels worshipped Him therein ! So is heaven itself, which gives not glory to Him, but receives it *from* Him who sitteth and reigneth therein ! Be sure that He will make the heart which accepts Him, fit to welcome Him, and transform it, and make it like himself. And He will *manifest* himself unto you, and you shall rejoice with exceeding great joy ; and He shall make you one of that company which no man can number, the church which is taken out of Jews and Gentiles, and the hosts of which cry, for evermore, with a loud voice, “ Salvation to our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. Amen.”

O God, who by the leading of a star,

didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles ; mercifully grant, that we, which know thee now by faith, may, after this life, have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen !

SERMON VII.

LUKE ix. 16.—“Then he took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.”

You remember, dear brethren, when our Lord was sorely worn by his forty days' fast in the wilderness, and his flesh was nigh to faint for lack of needful sustenance, that the tempter pointed to the fragments of rocks about his feet, and said, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these *stones* be made bread.” That is, if thou canst indeed create and fashion things at thy pleasure, as becomes the Son of God, if such thou art, save thyself from perishing

by famine in this wild waste, by a putting forth of thy power. It is all very well for wretches to pine and die amidst the sands of the desert, who cannot help themselves, but it befits not Thee, the great and mighty One, as thou professest! Stretch forth thy hand, thou wonder-worker, and minister to thy own necessity, ere thou die of hunger. But the Lord refused. "Man doth not live by bread alone," He said. And in obedience to the will of God who laid this temptation of grievous famine on his flesh, He awaited in faith and patience till that will was done, and the time came that angels descended and ministered unto Him! But that unlimited authority over the elements of nature, to create, to change, or to transform, which he refused to exercise to uphold his own fainting strength, he put gloriously forth, in his great mercy, to supply the wants of others.

And certainly, so to do, became well the divine and compassionate Saviour, who had stript himself of the glory which

He had with the Father before ever the world was made ; nay, *emptied* himself of all joy for a time, and was as the lowest and meanest of the sons of men ! He became poor that we might become rich ; hungry, that we might be full. And so his tender and compassionate heart could not bear that the multitudes who had been hanging on his lips, and had forgotten earthly things in their hunger and thirst for things divine, should faint by the way ! It was like Him who knoweth our infirmities, and careth for our wants, and was in all things made as we are, sin only excepted.

The whole account in the sacred history is interesting, and every little turn of it has something that throws light on the Lord's ways and dealings with his people. He had just before retired, as was his custom, into a desert place, belonging to the city of Bethsaida, as if to avoid the tumult of towns, and the noisy curiosity which the fame of his miracles and the power of his

teaching, had created in all men's bosoms, from the highest to the lowest. "This is none other than John the Baptist risen from the dead," exclaimed Herod, tormented by his evil conscience, as the murderer of the just and holy. And he *desired to see him*,—not to worship or obey, but to *see Him*. But they that would see Christ must come after Him, and so did not Herod. Wherever it be, though in the midst of *desolate wildernesses*, that the Saviour is to be found, thither will come all they that seek for Him! Yea, where He is, *there is no wilderness*, in deed and in truth, but pleasant springs of water, coming out of the dry ground, and the green pastures, where the great Shepherd of souls setteth his sheep to feed! Wherever Christ is, there is Eden back again. So thought and felt the multitudes here, who followed Him into his solitude! And He received them accordingly, and spake to them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. And thus

it always is. The withdrawal of the Saviour from our eyes for a while, is not a real refusal to speak to us the words of life, or do the deeds of divine healing on our souls. It is, so to say, only a *make-believe* to try our faith, and lead us to travel after Him, if so be that we may find Him whom our hearts desire ! He never wearieh or resteth from mercy. And though, as was now the case, he abandoned the cities, neither was his voice heard in the streets, he poured forth all his fulness to those who had sought Him out in the desert ! He wishes to be entreated ; He loves to be pursued ; He withholds for a while, only to heap his graces and blessings on the believing soul, a hundred-fold the more abundantly for the temporary withholding.

And when the day began to wear away, there came the twelve, and said unto Him, “ Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and get victuals, for we are here in a

desert place." No doubt they thought that a good day's work had been done already, and that it was time to rest, and take care of the body; though we are not told that the listening crowd themselves were conscious of any lapse of time, or of the going down of the sun. So sweet to their ears was the music of that divine voice which spake as never man spake before or since. Still bodies must be fed, as well as souls, and there was nothing, as yet, to be really blamed in the thought or words of the twelve. They felt as men, in ignorance perhaps, but pardonably! But He said unto them, "*Give ye them to eat;*" as if he had said, "Well, what you say is right, the multitudes are fainting, and divers came from far. They will sink, unless the flesh be supported by meat and drink! But it is not reasonable to send them from us, when the day is waning, and the light nigh gone. The women and children will fall down by the way! Doubtless, you who are so anxious about them,

are ready to supply their wants out of your own stores. Or you have foreseen the difficulty, and have laid in largely for our necessities and theirs ! Nay, I tell you, you must not dismiss them unsupplied, lest they faint ! *Give ye them to eat.*"

He meant likewise to suggest to them the thought that *He*, their Lord and Master, was *fully* aware of the wants and infirmities of the multitudes, whom the word of God had drawn so far from their homes. He needed not suggestion and advice as to what was to be done to succour them ; as He was wiser, so was He more loving than they. His eye more watchful and more provident, as well as his hand more powerful ! There could be no forgetfulness of the weary with Him ! No heedlessness of them that lacked,—none. If they, in their human hearts, knew what was good, and tender, and merciful, how much more He, the infinite fountain of all love, and goodness, and wisdom ; of whose fulness all that is good and thoughtful in

us is but as few and scanty drops ! There was no doubt, therefore, an under-song of gentle and solemn admonition in those words, commanding, as it seemed, an impossibility for *men*, or what perhaps was not in the power of ANY creature, “ *Give ye them to eat!*” Had they had understandings more practised, and more quick in spiritual matters, and in discerning their Lord’s meaning ; or had they clearly realized to themselves who it was that spake to them, and with what ease the words of creation, carrying their own accomplishment with them, issued from the lips of Him through whom, albeit in the flesh, all things subsist, they would have seen his intention ! They would have perceived that He knew what to do, and only tried them, whether they had a full faith in Him or no ! They would have said, Lord ! forgive us the rash and thoughtless word, that seemed to question thy goodness and thoughtfulness, though we *meant* no wrong by it. We indeed cannot give them to

eat, but *thou canst*. Thou art thyself the heavenly manna and bread that came down from heaven, and as thou didst feed our fathers in the wilderness, so thou canst feed these sheep, if it be thy pleasure !

But no suspicion of his meaning, or glimpse of his intention, appears to have struck them ! They said in serious expostulation, “ We have no more than five loaves and two fishes ; but what are they among so many ? ” In this reply there was, however, not only a certain lack of spiritual perception, and a childish simplicity, but a real goodness of feeling which our Lord doubtless approved. *All* they had was a scanty supply for so vast and hungry a multitude, but they were evidently perfectly willing to give ; their heart grudged it not. There was thus far no selfish hardness, no indisposition, as far as their power went, to obey the Lord’s command ! But *five* loaves and *two* fishes were manifestly, in themselves, utterly insufficient for the occasion ! there was the

stumbling-block. It is, however, probable that the next reply of Christ did really convey to them an intimation of what was about to follow. It awakened their attention. It excited their expectation. It held their minds and hearts in suspense as to some great thing that was to come. And He said to his disciples, “ Make the men sit down by fifties in a company !” And they did so, and made them all sit down—covering the grassy slopes of the hill on which He was seated. “ Then He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they did eat, and were *all filled !* ” Such is the divine narrative !

Now, no doubt, the first impression produced upon us, as well as upon those who were the spectators, and partakers of this miraculous feast, is astonishment at the greatness of the power exerted, and the unbounded authority over things in heaven and earth,

inherent in the marvellous person out of whom this creative virtue so bounteously, and yet so effortlessly, issued ! He who fed a hungry multitude with a few small loaves, could work ANY deed of power, however vast, whether of mercy, or of destruction ! He could not only rain down bread from heaven, and give men angels' food, but send from above fire and tempest to destroy ! He was as much a fit object of fear to those who should resist Him, as of hope and love to those who should follow and obey Him ! He who could feed, moreover, *could clothe*. He could command pearls out of the deep, and gold out of the mine. He could draw without limit, not only upon what could supply earthly wants and necessities, but all that could gratify the wildest wishes of the human heart,—its pride and its ambition. In fact, He was fit, were such his choice, to be a great king and conqueror ! So thought the Jews. Even their incredulity was overmastered for the moment, by this astonish-

ing exhibition of miraculous energy. And in their dark, carnal way, and earthly interpretation, they looked upon the worker of this unexpected wonder as the Messiah that was to be, and the destined King of Israel !

Now, no doubt it *was a great miracle*—a decisive evidence of the divine power of Him who wrought. It was a fit occasion, not only for exciting earthly hopes, and an interested admiration, but for spiritual adoration ; the trustingness and love of converted souls. And yet, in another sense, this *exhibition* of power was *but of scanty dimensions*, hardly deserving the wonder. Though it surpassed *human* faculties, it was a mere *intimation* of the adorable and unfathomable depths of deity which reside in the Redeemer. It was *a beam*, so to say, and no more, just escaping out of the fountains of light ; by which we measure not the capacities and extent of the glory enfolded therein, but by which we are taught to discern and to acknowledge the nature

and immensity of that heavenly treasure-house out of which it comes ! Very ill it would be with us, and very unworthily should we judge of the Lord and Giver of life, if we limited our conceptions of Him by the boundaries of what He actually wrought, however much above men to do, or however, in its own measure, adorable and divine. And I not only say, that this miraculous act of feeding the five thousand, bears no proportion at all to the infinite capacities of Him on whom we believe,—even the eternal Son of God,—and is but a drop out of the ocean of power which subsists within Him ; but something more I mean to affirm. It is nothing at all, compared with what the same divine energy operating by and through Him, exhibits now-a-days under your very eyes ! Christ, upon this occasion, wrought this overflowing banquet, not out of *nothing*, as when He called heaven and earth in their rude materials, into existence *at the first* ; but out of the loaves which the dis-

ciples placed ready in his Almighty hands ! And though I have called the act an act of creation, it is, more properly speaking, a *multiplying* and *enlarging* of what already existed. Just, as in ancient times, the widow's loaf and the cruise of oil ever grew and grew, and flowed and flowed, while the times of famine lasted. The one needed divine power quite as much as the other. And, whether in one sense it might be accounted a mightier miracle or not, had he called the feast out of nothing, certainly it would not so completely, in its mode of operation, have harmonized, as it now does, with God's daily wonders.

Year after year, you behold your fields ripe and overflowing with golden harvests, till to the eyes and ears of them that can understand, the very earth, through all her vallies, laughs and sings ! Is it not glorious, thus to behold the ground, that looks so dull and senseless, pouring forth its inexhaustible treasures, to gladden the heart of man ? whence come they ?

whence come the overflowing heaps of nodding ears, which you gather into your barns ? why, out of *the seeds* you sow ! Out of *small handfuls* come forth all these *mighty sheaves !* How ? why the power of God enlarges, and *multiplies them*. He gathers from the air, and from the water, and from the dust, new elements which he joins marvellously together, and the buried grain of corn brings forth, thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold of what it was at first. Our heavenly Father, day by day, and year by year, not only feeds *five thousand*, but more millions of living souls than the hairs of your head. From one quarter of heaven to another, He openeth his bounteous hand, and, from *the five loaves*,—that is, the *scanty measure of seed committed to the earth's bosom*,—filleth all things living with *plenteousness*. So that the wonder which Christ wrought for the five thousand men in the desert of Bethsaida, you behold every succeeding harvest, wrought before your eyes, for the innu-

merable multitudes who would pine and languish into the dust without it !

But, in both cases, God *works* in the same manner, through the same divine instrument, by whom also, as the apostle tells us, he made the worlds. It is through *Him*, who *blessed* the broken loaves, ere he distributed them by his disciples to the multitude, and they grew and multiplied as he blessed them ; and who still blesses the fruits of the earth, and sanctifies them to those that have faith in Him ! Aye, and He bestows them richly and plenteously even on those who believe Him not ! And I mention this, dear brethren, lest, while we read or hear the miracle, it should be with the same barren wonder which it awakened in the minds of the Jews. We should thus fail to reach the depths of wisdom which it indeed contains ! It would be an ill thing, to confess, with empty words, the greatness of the Lord's work, while, with blind hearts, and out of that perverse contradiction incident to

understandings which sin has blinded, we refuse to acknowledge daily miracles greater and more glorious; conveyed through the same instrumentality, and hallowed by the same blessing, to all that love the Creator in the Redeemer, and worship God in Christ Jesus whom he hath sent! Certainly, the inspiring Spirit intended that we should gather from the history this great lesson. That we should, in thought, combine indissolubly in one, the meat that feedeth the body with that which sustains the soul; and in the *oneness* of the dispensations of *nature and of grace*, together adore the Father and the Son, in the union of the blessed Spirit! “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” “Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead. But he that eateth of the bread that I shall give him shall live for ever.” Lord, evermore, give us of this divine bread, even thyself, that we may eat, and live for ever.

Certainly, as the event proved, nothing

could be more barren and unfruitful than this great miracle was to the Jews. And such was the blindness of their understandings, the hardness of their hearts, and their incapacity of rising from things earthly to things spiritual and heavenly, that, like other good things, it turned to evil in *them*! It encouraged their carnal conceptions of the nature of the Redeemer's kingdom; and while they would have taken Him by force and made Him a King, they came to Him in crowds, not for the doctrine which he taught, the *words of truth and life*, but for the bread that sustains the body! It was confirmation, in the end, not to their belief, but to their unbelief! But there is one lesson which is conveyed directly and irresistibly by this magnificent exertion of power and love, and which is so important, so comforting, and so indispensable to a consistent Christian walking in the midst of this world's trials and temptations, that it would be inexcusable to omit it. That lesson is

trust in God to supply our worldly wants, so long as we faithfully serve and love Him. “One thing is needful,” says our Lord! “Take *no thought*,” that is, overanxiety, “for what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of troubled mind, for all these things do the Gentiles seek. Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall *be added unto you!* For your heavenly Father, knoweth that ye have need of these things.” Nothing is clearer than the promise! where is the faith men should put in it?

Now, if anything is more evident than another to those who go in and go out among Christians, it is this; that the great majority, sometimes even with loud professions, have no such faith. *They do not in the least believe* in these declarations of their Lord! I do not mean that they *deny* them avowedly. *No*, but they do so in their lives, which is the stronger denial of the two. They do not think that *one thing is needful*, or if they do, it is *this*

world's interests, or pleasures, and *not the next's!* They do not *believe* that God will provide for those who suffer loss, for fear of Him, and for conscience sake. They will take nothing on trust! If they did, they would not refuse to obey God's clearest commandments, whenever they see, or fancy that they see, that they will be losers by taking the straight path of duty, and doing their Lord's will. Their law is not,—“all must give way to my heavenly Father's command; He has *said it, it is written, that is enough to me!*” But it is the contrary. “God or the Gospel must *give way* to the *world*—to my pleasures, to my gains. I wish I could serve *God and mammon!* but, as I cannot, I will take my chance. I go with the world and mammon!” May God have mercy on such men's souls, and give them grace to choose the good part, while it is yet day. As they are, they cannot stand in the judgment! With this deliberate election of a master they cannot have their portion

in the inheritance of the saints in light ! But never fear, ye that truly hunger and thirst after righteousness ! Ye who seek in the first place after God, and are willing, not only to surrender an idle vanity, or a miserable gain, for God's sake, but to suffer any loss, however grievous, if so it must be, rather than forfeit the love of God, and your portion in the saints eternal joys ! Be of good cheer ! faithful is He that hath promised !

Nay, a thousand-fold shall be the reward which he shall pour into your bosom, when the day of recompence shall come ! I am sure even in this world, they that love and serve Him, shall not lack for food or raiment. He that feedeth the young ravens, and clothes with more than a kingly glory the flowers of the field, which to-day are, and to-morrow are cast into the oven, watcheth over his children, his chosen out of the world in Christ Jesus ! A mother may forget her sucking child, but never can our heavenly Father forget us ! And

so we may take comfort from our Lord's words here, if our souls doubt or falter. "Send them away," said the disciples of the fainting multitude, "that they may go into the towns, and the country round about, and get themselves food!" But He said, "*Give ye them to eat.*"

It is, therefore, perfectly certain that all who make their souls their first concern, place themselves under the DIRECT and SPECIAL care of Almighty God. When Saint Paul said to the Philippians, "My God shall supply all your need," he spoke from his own experience. *It is found to be so.* Very, very few have ever been made poorer, even as regards this world, by following Christ entirely, and leaving themselves fully in the hands of Him whom they serve and love above all things in heaven and earth! This may be strange doctrine to the carnal man, but we cannot help it. All is strange in the Gospel, and the flesh cannot understand or receive the things of the Spirit. We live not by

sight, if we are of Christ, but by faith, because we know that the things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal.

O thou, who didst in thy great love and compassion, sustain them who had forgotten home and earthly things, that they *might follow and hear thee*, with bread enough and to spare, give unto us the same trusting and loving spirit, and the same hunger and thirst after divine truth. Be unto us, O Lord, not only the giver of that daily bread which thou wilt not withhold from them who serve thee, but the bread and water of life, nay, *the very life* itself, and the resurrection and the glory which shall never pass away ! Amen !

SERMON VIII.

JER. v. 22—24.—“Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

“But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

“Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”

AND so this was the end of all the privileges with which the people of Israel had been crowned, from one generation to another! that they had a revolting, and

a rebellious heart. And as was the heart, so was the life; they were revolted and gone from their God and Father! There was to them no Lord of heaven and earth, to fear for his power, or love for his goodness.

And yet we should have thought beforehand, that the more blessings they enjoyed, the more thankful they would have been. The greater the light that shone round about them, the more perfectly they ought to have kept the right path. The more compassionate and long-suffering God had been to them, the more ardently they ought to have loved Him, and the more heartily they ought to have obeyed Him in all things. At least, so we should have thought, did we not know the exceeding perverseness and unaccountable ingratitude of the human heart, not in Israel only, but in all men. And *this* I am afraid would lead us to an opposite conclusion! If we looked at things, not as they *ought in reason to be*, but as

they are, we should *fear* more than hope, in most cases, from this very abundance of God's mercies. Experience would teach us to presume, till we knew the contrary, that the more gracious our heavenly Father is, the more thoughtless are his children ; and the more boundless his love, the stronger is men's resolution to show that their ingratitude can always exceed it. Their will to sin, is a match for his that they should be holy !

At all events so it was in Israel. They were at once the most blessed, and the most accursed : the *nighest to God*, and yet the *farthest* from him, of all the nations of the earth ; the most loved, and the most hated. This is an *awful* contradiction, yet *how true* it is ! not only *how possible*, but *how true*, our own consciences can tell us ! And mark well how the Prophet speaks of these thankless and rebellious people, and implies more than he speaks ! After describing their perverseness, it would have been

very natural and reasonable to have spoken thus : “ But seeing that they thus forget the Lord that made them, and hath so wonderfully separated them from among the nations, and crowned them with mercy and loving-kindness, God hath stretched out his hand upon them to destroy them ! He has made the earth iron to them, and the heavens as brass ! He hath forbidden his sun to shine, and his rains to fall ; and the earth’s womb hath been smitten with barrenness, so that she shall no more bring forth her fruits in their due season.” *Had God* said so, this would have been very just. But God’s ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts, as our thoughts. “ *Be ye like your Father which is in heaven,*” says our Lord : “ for he maketh his sun to shine on the evil, and on the good ; and sendeth his rain upon the just, and upon the unjust.” And *so it was* in those former days, of which the prophet was speaking as well as now. There was no difference in the seasons, in spite of all the sins of

the land ! They came and went in their appointed order, as from the foundation of the world unto this day ; and as the seed was sown, so it grew. The hills of Palestine were covered with the fruit of the vine, and the vallies *laughed and sung* with the glorious harvest.

As though God had said thus to himself after the manner of men :—“ Well ! I see that this people will have nothing to do with me as their heavenly Father ! They will not give me their heart and soul, though I have done my best to win them. And as a *spiritual* God, inwardly to be loved and worshipped, in purity and in holiness, they will not admit the thought of me ! Be it so,—be it as they will ! LET them obey their own hearts' lusts, and follow their own imagination ! But *I* will STILL so deal with them, that, wherever their foot shall tread, or their eyes shall turn, the world shall be full to them of the works of my bounty and of my providence. They shall still eat out

of my hands; they shall drink of my mercy, as out of a river. The earth shall still be fruitful, and serve them, as if it was their slave. Perhaps the time will come, when their heart within them is glad in the harvest days, and they shall see their corn and oil increase, that they will think of me, the giver of it all. And then their heart will smite them for their ingratitude, and they will turn to me and repent! And so I will be once more their God, and they shall be my people." Thus, without irreverence, after the manner of men, may we suppose God to speak, and thus at least He acted. And in fact there was nothing else to do, so long as God was still minded to deal with these people, not in judgment, but in mercy! They absolutely refused to acknowledge Him, as an inward heart-searching God, who was to be laid up in the innermost soul, and therein loved and cherished above every thing else. They would have *no God*, but the gods of the heathens,—*no king*, but their own wild

will. So there was an end of that! It only *remained* that He should either hide himself altogether, or reveal himself to *them*, as he does to all the world, no longer in grace but in nature. And so he did. He showed himself in the order of the world, and the building up of the great firmament; in the beauty and harmony, which *all* things in heaven and earth breathe, through all our senses, into the soul; in the wondrous succession, in their unending circle, of summer and winter and seed-time and harvest! Even so he had decreed, when the SECOND earth, rose out of the flood—*baptized*, as it were, by those destroying and yet cleansing waters. “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” That is, if I punish, as often as men sin, there will be no end to my judgments. I must be always punishing; therefore, *I* will be merciful, whether or no! “Neither will I again smite any more every

living thing, as I have done." Then comes the *charter* under which we now live, "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

But it may be said, though there was nothing else to be done except to leave his people to themselves and his natural providence, yet it was very little likely that they whose stiff neck and hard heart had resisted so many *special* interferences, would be moved by God's ordinary mercies, and the *universal* bounties of his love. And *certainly* it was not likely. I grant it,—for they who are not melted by a greater act of love, are very little apt to be affected by a less. But if any man should mean to say in his heart that this *dulness* to ordinary mercies, because it was a *probable* and a *natural* thing, was *therefore* excusable; to any such foolish and sinful imagination a Christian must say, "*God forbid!*" These *ordinary* bounties,

whereby the life was kept strong within *them* and *us*; whereby along with the fowls of the air they were fed and clothed,—were, and are, at all events, things which all men could perfectly understand and adequately value. I can suppose a man to say to me, and in fact it does often practically happen that a man says so, “ You speak to me about *spiritual blessings* and God’s grace, and the great things which He has done for my *soul*, but I fairly tell you that I do not understand you. I have no such mysterious wants, and care not about such marks of God’s love. I look to more solid things! things of the world, things of this life, things which will feed and clothe me.” I answer, “ Well! at all events, you comprehend *that life and health and bodily strength* are blessings. Though you have lost any heavenlier cravings, and have thus deadened the heart God has given you into something not much nobler or any way higher than the beasts that perish, yet you can clearly see,

that to *have* wherewithal to be clothed and wherewithal to be fed, is a good to be valued ! These are worth having from whomsoever they may come to you. Now neither the one nor the other *can* come except from the earth's bosom. And *nobody*, from the beginning of the world until now, except a few wicked and foolish men who have said in their hearts, ‘there is no God,’ have ever doubted that it is God that gives them. I say therefore love God at least for feeding and clothing you. Fear God as the absolute Lord and Master of the heaven above and the earth beneath, of the winds and of the sun and of the rains, and all that you see in the wonderful world wherein you find yourself placed. Yes, and O man, whoever thou art, He is *thy* Lord and Master too ; Lord of thy soul as well as thy body, as thou wilt sometime find in woe and righteous judgment, if thou wilt not acknowledge Him to be so *now* in his love and patience !”

This, I suppose, anybody who still remains a man, with the smallest power to think and reason, *can* comprehend. *Here* at least is no mystery! And therefore, because *all such* blessings are such that everybody confesses the want of them, and understands the nature of them, and feels the delight of them, it becomes a mark of great wickedness and really a brute-like insensibility not to acknowledge them. Nay, it is more so, in one sense, than in greater and more *spiritual* blessings; *for they* do require something higher within us, to seek and to value them adequately.

The gratitude due to God for the fruits of the seasons is a *common* ground, on which you may argue effectually even with the darkest heathen that ever lay in the valley of the shadow of death, and the merest idolater of stocks and stones. It was thus that St. Paul reasoned at Lystra: "We preach unto you," he says, "that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the

sea, and all things that are therein. Who, in times past, suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. *Nevertheless*, He left not Himself without witness in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." This was sound reasoning, therefore, even to a congregation of idolaters. And it is on *the very same* principle that the great apostle reasons in that *awful* first chapter to the Romans, in which, as with the mouth of God himself, and as though we were all standing under the judgment-seat, bare within and without before the eyes of the judge, He convicts all mankind, Jew and Gentile, of sin before God! Indeed, if you doubt whether *the Spirit is in that book*, and the power and wisdom of God along with it, read that chapter. It is not a set of words, but *a sword*. What scripture says is quite true—it pierces the very heart and reins. You will find that the reason which the apostle gives for denying to the

heathen any excuse in their great wickedness and besotted idolatry, rests entirely on their wilful blindness to the marks of God's love and power in the world around them. It is their *thanklessness for the bounties of the seasons*, and the mercy with which his almighty hand is for ever working for us; *nay, visibly* feeding and upholding the living multitudes wherewith He hath replenished the earth. "Because," saith He, "that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it to them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. *So that they are without excuse*, because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, *neither were thankful.*"

And yet, to do the *heathen* justice, there were *some* respects in which, in outward forms at least, they far surpassed, in this matter, the generality both of Jews

and of Christians. Obscured as all their religious feelings were, and though, even in their best moments, they rather *felt* after God, if haply they could find Him, than really reached Him—yet in some things they did *touch Him*, or at least the border of his robe, some how or other. They *testified to great truths!* The WISE men among them, of course, were,—as wisemen in their own conceits everywhere are,—careless enough about the matter. But the *great multitude* of men in heathen times *never doubted*, at any rate, but that the harvest and the vintage were the gift of God. Nay, more than that, they made offerings and sacrifices at the gathering in of the harvest, as an acknowledgment of what they had received; and in loud hymns and chorusses of joy, crowned with wreaths of flowers, and bearing ears of the fresh-given corn in their hands, they sang thanksgivings to their gods! They were the guides and rulers of the seasons, and the bestowers, with full hands, upon man-

kind, of the corn, and the oil, and the wine. Their *hearts* indeed were far from God, and in their works and ways they denied the holy One and the true. But here *they had laid hold on the right*; there gushed forth, in its truthful fulness, the heart of nature, and the *voice* of nature proclaimed it aloud, as well beseemed it. It wanted but a little more knowledge for them to join in the song of David which is in every Christian's heart, and on his lips when he looks upon the fields thick with corn; “Thou visitest the earth, O Lord, and blessest it; thou makest it very plenteous. The river of God is full of water. Thou preparest their corn, for so thou providest for the earth. Thou waterest her furrows, thou sendest rain into the little vallies thereof; thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy clouds drop fatness.”

It is evident, therefore, from all this, that there was a *great* sin upon the part

of Israel, when, even as natural men, they refused to acknowledge the mercies of God's ordinary providence, and were not softened or converted by his unmerited goodness ! The prophet is *right* when, in my text, he makes this insensibility the sign of their hopeless rebellion, and the unquestionable fruit of a reprobate spirit. “ Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in their proper season. He *reserveth* unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.” He evidently meant to say, “ If they do not see this they can see nothing, *there is no hope* for them.” Of course, dear brethren, we may treat all this as though it did not concern us ! Just as we may turn every scripture warning, whether merciful or wrathful, into an empty sound. We may become even as the deaf adder, of which the psalmist speaks, on whom no song has power to work, and who refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never

so wisely. But if we do so we commit a great sin, and must answer for it at the judgment !

And every thoughtful man who has the fear of God in his heart, will confess that there never was a season which *ought* to *thrust home* on our very innermost hearts, the love and thankfulness to God for his natural bounties of which I have been speaking, more forcibly than that which is *just passing over* our heads. Though sad as it is to say so, we are yet compelled to believe that this sense of God's bounty, and this thankful fulness of the heart for the fruits of the earth, is not the feeling of all who bear the name of Christ. Many, many Christians dare to reap without God ! and as many eat their bread without Him. *Nay*, it seems to be peculiar to Christians, so called, to be *ashamed* of *confessing God*, as the orderer and giver of all things. Where Heathens and Mahometans would have a manly pleasure, as a matter of course, in acknowledging the bounty of

the heavenlygiver, you see Christians falter. God forbid that we should charge you with it. In many of every congregation we KNOW there is a sound, faithful, and godly heart; and where we do not *know* it, I am sure that, in christian charity, we would still hope it. But in more than one case it must have happened to many among us of late, when we have remarked that God has been indeed merciful and bountiful to us this harvest, in permitting us to gather in the fruits of the earth, that we have not had the *hearty* christian answer, "Yes, indeed we ought. He HAS been very merciful!" There is not *indeed* a *denial*, but a cold, reluctant, hesitating assent, enough to chill the heart within us! Now there is something awful in this *thankless* feeling, this evil heart of unbelief, even in the midst of God's mercies. When you may, so to say, actually *see* with your own eyes the author of all good in the very *midst* of us, throwing aside the clouds and darkness that are round about Him! It not only

chills the warm christian heart, but it fills it with *fear and trembling*. And for this reason. We know, of a surety, that the God who is in the midst of us, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being, is *indeed a God great and terrible*, and exceeding jealous of the honour due unto his name. We *know* that He has, over and over again, plagued guilty and thankless nations, even upon earth, because of their unthankfulness, as a foretaste of the everlasting fire. It is *impossible* therefore, not to *fear* that He may do the same to *us*. A Christian says to himself when he thus meets with a man who is ashamed to acknowledge God in the midst of his bounties, “God grant that this spirit may not be that of most men. Of a surety his long-suffering will be exhausted, and his wrath will burst forth among us and consume us, as with fire, in a moment! Put, O Lord, a better spirit into men’s hearts, so that they may thank thee for thy mercies, and live and not die.” “And it shall

come to pass," saith God, " if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart, and all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn. Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, serving other gods; and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, and there be no more rain, and that the land yield not her fruit, and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you. When thou hast eaten and art full, thou shalt then bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, lest, when thou hast eaten and art full, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God; and it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, I testify

against you this day, that ye shall surely perish."

And again, there is another fear, a fear for the thankless Christian himself. For what if God, who sees, and hears, and judges all things, and who not only appoints the weeks of harvest, but every man's day of trial, measuring out to *a moment* the hours of its lasting, should call this man away in the midst of his thanklessness and unbelief? What would become of the soul for which Christ hath died, and to which God hath been so merciful, and yet which, in deed and in truth, denies God and is ashamed of Him, while yet the fresh bread just created for his use is in his mouth, wherewith the Lord feedeth him? It is one of the real sorrows to which, not only a minister of Christ, but every earnest Christian is exposed, that he cannot help such thoughts as these coming over him, till his eyes are full of tears, and his heart of bitterness. At such times we understand somewhat of the unutterable

and measureless woe which filled the heart of the Son of God as He thought on the curse upon sin and sinners ! We discern his grief when his all-seeing eye beheld, on whichever side He looked, multitudes of souls, made in the image of God, yet self-condemned by the hardness of their hearts to the dwelling-place of the thankless and the wicked ! It is *a drop* from that bitter cup of which *He* drank to the dregs !

Why when, a few weeks since, the sun which had been so long hidden from us, was again permitted to shine upon the earth—when the clouds were bound up so that the rains should not fall, in all the *great towns* the very first subject on every one's lips was the delightful change. Almost everybody congratulated his friend in the public streets, and with good cause. Had this darkness of the heavens, this *summer eclipse* and unnatural winter continued a fortnight longer, no power on earth could have changed the crude and unhardened

grain into food for man. Our harvest would have rotted in the fields. The golden sheaves which we have laid up in our barns would have been as worthless as the vilest weeds. The toil and hopes of the year, the sweat with which the ground has been moistened by the husbandman, would all have been thrown away. We cannot demand, as a right, the use of that glorious sun and quickening wind which God, to convince you that they are *his* and not yours, withheld till the last moment, and then granted to our prayers. *Foreign* harvests would have availed us little, for those countries on the continent which usually *overflow* with corn when our own harvest fails, are themselves, this year, well nigh barren. God moreover, has put forth his hand, as we well know, on another *staple* of life, and we see the wholesome food of man and beast turned to poison under our eyes! What then must have been the result? Famine, and, that which ever follows famine, disease and a wasting pesti-

lence. Then would have arisen a wail and a cry through the length and breadth of the land, and no earthly power to succour us. “In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning ; *Rachel weeping for her children.*” Brethren—brethren, it is the hand of God, and with humble hearts and bended knees, and with true repentance, let us acknowledge it.

Finally, I trust there are none here who, while the harvest was in that state of awful uncertainty, and men’s hearts sunk for fear, *failed*, in their own houses, to *pray to God* to be merciful and give us the fruits of the earth in due season. The church furnishes all a prayer. But if there be any who have been thus unthoughtful let them repair the fault by thanking *God in their families*, even yet, for the grace He has bestowed upon us ! I trust there is no one here who has led his family or his servants to suppose, in other ways, that he does not *see* and bless the hand of God

in this and in all visitations, either for good or evil. But if there be, let him repair his fault, and by the words of his lips give a manly, christian testimony to Him who is not only King of kings and Lord of lords, but *his Lord* and *his Master*, the giver of the soul's and body's daily bread.

It may be, however, as is usually the case, that the eye is blind to God in the *natural* wonders which He works around us, and the ear deaf to his voice which is for ever sounding, because the heart has not embraced Him in the gospel of his Son ! We refuse to bless the Creator, because we have no portion in the Redeemer. Come, if any such there be, come to your Saviour while it is yet day. Come to Him before you are removed for evermore from the world of nature and the world of grace, into that where there is neither nature nor grace ;—in which God's face never shineth, where everlasting darkness shall be a burthen to the eye quite as much as

the everlasting anguish shall grind and crush the soul !

In HEAVEN there is neither sun nor moon, nor sowing-time nor harvest. And we shall not *miss* them. For men toil not there with the sweat of their brow ; and draw their harvests, not from the bosom of a reluctant earth,—but from the fulness of God. He is the light of that glorious world, and the Lamb is in the midst of that eternal Temple. In HELL, too, there is neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor the greenness of the earth, nor the gladness of the sky, and nothing to make up the loss. It is a *horror* of terrible blackness,—a night from which, not only God, but the beautiful creatures of God shall withdraw their shining. THERE, *too*, is neither seed-time therefore, nor harvest. For the time of change and trial is over, and the only thing that abides is the woe and sin which the wicked have garnered up. For as in nature so in grace it re-

maineth an eternal truth, that as a man soweth so shall he also reap. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting!"

SERMON IX.

MATT. viii. 26.—“ And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm! But the men marvelled!”

BUT though the disciples marvelled, yet do not we; not, perhaps, because we have more faith, but because circumstances are changed. Here indeed is one of the many vast differences, so difficult to realize, between them and ourselves, in the manner wherewith, throughout the sacred history, we regard our blessed Lord.

To us, from our mother’s breast almost, Christ is presented in his *fulness*; and, whether our hearts receive Him or not in a loving and appropriating faith, yet our

thoughts, at all events, regard Him aright, and as He is. *Our* very first communings with Him in prayer are with Him in his *glory*. *We* have never beheld Him upon *earth*! And though, when we read of Him, or think of Him, the shape and aspect of man seems to clothe Him, yet the very flesh and blood are heavenly bright, and He hath put on to us his incorruption! The fulness of his visible manhood we only master by degrees, ending where the first disciples began. We regard Him, not as He stood before Pilate, or as the carpenter's son! not as He seemed at Nazareth, but rather as He revealed Himself to St. John: "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks I saw one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the

sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength!"

Now it very rightly strikes us that there is no marvel at all at anything which a Being so great and glorious, outwardly and palpably as this, might choose to do. It is very natural, and in the necessary course of things, not only that the winds of Galilee and the Sea of Gennesareth should obey Him, but that the whole frame of nature, heaven and earth, should listen to Him, and flee from his countenance if he were wroth. But it was only by very slow degrees that his disciples advanced to this knowledge. No doubt there shot forth from him unmistakeable tokens of power and unearthly majesty,—a strange dignity sinking into men's souls, which they felt, albeit they could not explain it. Yet still their eyes, in looking on Him, rested on a form and

lineaments such as other men wore. He was, in all this, *as his brethren*. This was the *permanent* impression to the senses! “What manner of *man* is this,” they said, “that even the winds and sea obey Him!”

And if we keep in mind this association of the thoughts with the outward visible manhood of the Lord, there is nothing surprising either, that the miracles of healing which had flowed round Him, in such streams of life and mercy, should not have prepared them for this control over nature. For, though to heal the sick, and cleanse the leper, at a touch or a word, as Christ did, and in his own mighty name, clearly testified a divine authority; yet this came, after all, more within human experience than controlling the winds and the waves! They had seen sickness depart, and lame men restored, albeit, not in an instant, as they did when *he* spake. But that the turbulent tossing waves, the wandering wind that bloweth and rageth where it listeth,—the fierce un-

governable elements that neither heed nor hear man,—should be bridled, was a thing, in their estimation, far above prophet to accomplish! And, at all events, if not more wonderful, it was a new *line* and *order* of miracle ; and an unfamiliarity with a thing has quite as much to do with the wonder it awakens as its intrinsic greatness or difficulty. It seems to have transported them with amazement as much as any outward exhibition of power could do. We find it, moreover, recorded minutely by *three* of the evangelists, and we may be certain, therefore, that it has some profound instruction in it, and some intimate relation with our Lord's nature and offices.

Let us then consider it, and try to reach some of its deeper meanings !

Now it must be confessed that miracles of this description, miracles of *power and force*, were not so essential to the Lord's ministry of mercy as those of healing which ordinarily accompanied his goings to and

fro among men. They have not the same direct and obvious relation to that healing of the soul from the plague and cancer of sin by his precious blood, which He himself, in a great variety of ways, ever connects with the other. No one can read of men being delivered from Satan's earthly power over the body without instantly thinking of our *spiritual* deliverance from it.

They did not either *come in his way*. His enemies were not winds and waves, brute unconscious elements, but evil men and evil angels; and he had neither to convince them, nor to protect Himself from their violence. You have indeed only this *one* instance. But though this miracle is a *single* act of its kind, the *intimations* of our Lord's divine nature would hardly have been complete without it. Just as it would seem probable, that, though the Lord and Giver of life dwelt in flesh and blood, and *habitually* veiled his power, yet that, every *now and then*,

there would be a shooting forth of living energy, enough to show to thoughtful observers that there it was! As the same quickening and productive power which works in the earth's fruits and harvests was *seen* for a moment when the five thousand were fed,—so surely, He, by whom and through whom the world and its more turbulent elements were made, and are upheld, must, *some time or other*, show almost unconsciously and inadvertently that *He* it was who trod the earth. All modes of power *may* of course be inferred *from each*; but yet each may be regarded *apart*!

This is not unreasonable, as the results in each case, in scripture, prove. The world was made by the Word, and without Him was not *anything* made that was made. Much less the mightiest, and most uncontrollable elements, which God still keepeth in his own power, stilling them and awakening them as he will,—the winds and the waters! It was the Word *now* made flesh, that first divided the waters

above from the waters below, and set the firmament between them, which still keeps them apart. He fixed the sand as a bound to the great deep, that it should not pass it. He said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther!" So that though the waves toss and swell, they cannot prevail, so long as man is on the earth, lest they come in and devour him! It was through Him, as the Angel of the Covenant manifested in the Shekinah, that the winds blew, and the divided waters overwhelmed Pharaoh and all his hosts.

Scripture delights in associating the power and the majesty of God with both the sea and the stormy winds. "Thou didst blow with thy wind," says Moses, "and the waters covered them." "The Lord rode upon the cherubim and did fly; he came flying upon the wings of the wind." "Thou stillest the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people." "The waves of

the sea are mighty, and rage horribly; but the Lord that sitteth on high is mightier.” “The Lord sitteth above the water-flood; the Lord abideth a king for ever.” “At his command the stormy wind ariseth that lifteth up the waves thereof.” “He bringeth the winds out of his treasures.” “The sea saw Him, and fled, Jordan was driven back.” “The mountains saw thee and trembled; the overflowing of the waters passed by; the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.”

But the Scripture is full of similar passages! All of them pointing out to us that those elements in the heaven and earth about us, which no human strength can limit or control, are but the servants of Jehovah, our own merciful God, and do his pleasure either to save or to destroy. Moreover, the miracles of the law and the Gospel sometimes interchange. The dealings of God under the law, through and by the same Mediator, while they abound with direct and awful interferences with

the course of outward nature, yet have strains of love and mercy, which forecast and anticipate the Gospel. So *even* the healing marvels of the Gospel, centring in Christ Jesus, are sufficiently intermixed with power exerted on the outward world, to testify to the identity of the same all-working energy, though habitually seen in its *loving* aspect ! In all there is but one God. There are many gifts, but the same Spirit ; diversities of operations; but the same Lord ! The same remark, which was applied to the miracle of the loaves and fishes, therefore, applies here. You are not to *measure*, by either of them, the power of Christ which is illimitable, and beyond either our thoughts to conceive, or words to express ! You cannot *confine* or grasp the infinite ! But you see in each an *intimation* not to be mistaken, that He is Lord of heaven and earth, and that he holdeth earth and sea in the hollow of his hand, disposing them according to his own absolute will and

pleasure. He hath power to protect his own from all evils, either of the soul or of the body, from outward and from inward dangers ! Though, therefore, in relation to *us*, it is a marvellous exertion of power, and a mere man could as soon move Mount Ararat from its base, as turn a whirlwind into breathless air, and swelling billows into a peaceful lake, yet is it, on the other hand, an exertion of energy and dominion inappreciably small, compared with what is daily exerted over winds and sea, in behalf of man.

You know not, dear brethren, with how nice a balance all the elements in this marvellous but transitory world are weighed out and adjusted ! You know not *how slight* a variation in the strength of forces which are ever at work above us, and below us, and around us, would sweep all this beautiful frame of things, and the living souls with which it teems, into horrible wreck and ruin ! At the present moment, we and all the race of Adam

are living and standing, so to say, between two *graves* of the world, unfathomable abysses, in both of which there is ruin. On the one hand is the *grave* that is past, and has swallowed up its prey—that flood of waters in which the living souls of Noah's generation perished ! On the other is the grave that is to come,—the fiery pit with all-devouring and insatiable mouth which awaiteth the wicked at the last day ! For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared. He hath made it deep and large ! The pile thereof is fire and much wood ! The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Now, dear brethren, both in the one case and in the other, the outward material elements of the world have been, and will be, the instruments of the divine wrath, working from without in the bodies of the wicked what the worm of conscience works in the soul. And the mode of God's operations is the same. He has

only to take off *that hand* of strong control which he has laid, for our sakes, on the elements out of which this world is made, and we are lost! He has only to *unbridle* fire and water and the stormy winds, and the work of ruin is done. Not more surely would the boat have been swallowed in Gennesareth than this fair frame would be in a fiery ocean.

And so it is that, at the present moment, the existing condition of the earth, with its seed-time and harvest and summer and winter, only continues *upon sufferance*. We are *under covenant*. It is in virtue of a special promise of God, and of nothing else, that, till the day of judgment comes, we are secure from either flood or fire that shall destroy our habitation! That promise to Noah is the earth's charter. It is but a very short period, not more than four thousand years, that the present condition of things, and tempering of the elements has endured. How much longer it may endure, no man can

tell. There is no security for its permanence. Though the laws by which the elements are guided be unchangeable, yet their *proportions*,—the *check* on their power to destroy—are mutable. And the voice which said to the sea and winds of Galilee, Peace, be still! is that which controls them. He saith to the fire, “Peace, be still!” stay till the time is come! And to the water, “Peace!” And to the whirlwinds, “Peace!” And so there is a great calm till the end of all things shall be come.

But there is another exertion of power which is for ever going forth from Christ into his saints, in comparison of which, the greatest exercise of it you can conceive in authority over the elements, is hardly worth the naming! That is the dominion which Christ exercises over the inward soul! That spirit which is by nature tossed up and down by fierce desires, lusts and passions, in which such stormy winds from the far ends of heaven are

always blowing, and which hath in itself no principle of permanence or source of peace by which this unrest can be stilled, is yet obedient to the word of Him that made it! When he speaketh to it, in his power and mercy, *there* too there is a great calm. And I call this a greater power, as it is an infinitely greater blessing, because, after all, earth and air and water, and all material things, have no will, nor inward power, nor consciousness of self, but can only move and act, as He that made them commands that they should! But *they* that have living spirits within them, like us, and like the angels, have something that *can* resist even God himself. Our *wills*, our *choice*, cannot be moved or crushed, like earth and water, but must be melted and changed, according to the laws which act on immortal spirits, by the mighty power of God! Therefore, it is perfectly true, that, so far as the exertion of power is concerned, there is really something much

more striking and wonderful in calming the turbulent spirit, and subduing the iron will, and bringing the inward waves into subjection to Christ, than in controlling that which is insensible and cannot resist !

But the *one represents the other*. And there is this practical resemblance between the *peace* which Christ imposed upon the winds and waves, and that which He bestows on the unresting soul ! No doubt the winds and the waves rose again and again upon the lake, and the disciples were again tossed to and fro when they were boisterous ! But they were not devoured by them ! The wind was as high then as when he lay asleep in the boat, and the boat was covered with the waves, and they woke Him and cried, “ Lord ! save us, we perish ! ” But they were no longer men of little faith, and they knew the Lord was watching over them, and they waited, in patience and hope, till he said, “ Peace, be still ! ” So it is with

the Christian now ! Whatever life may be to the young, or some few among us on whom no wind ever seems to blow, it is to most of us, sooner or later, vexed with winds and storms. Storms within, even the struggle of an evil will, perverse passions and unsubdued affections ; storms from without, even sickness, affliction, evils from all the ends of heaven ! But having faith in Christ, we cannot perish ! We may be sore beset, weary with rowing and contending against the winds and waters, sighing for our harbour of rest, and straining our eyes through spray and mist to catch sight of our place of refuge. But we are not lost, nor can we be, while Christ is with us ! When deep answereth deep because of the noise of the water-pipes, and God's waves and storms have well nigh gone over our heads, then Christ arises from his sleep, and says, " Peace, be still !" And there is a great calm ! *Verily there is a rest even here for the people of God.*

And this brings me to my concluding point! Still holding fast this connection of things spiritual and things natural, and making the one an image of the other, there is a further resemblance between the two in the present instance. It is only right and fitting that saints who have not yet attained their rest, but who are tossed with sorrows and tried by temptations, should dwell in an *outward* world like ours, likewise deformed and vexed with winds and waves. To live in a world of glory with torn, unquiet hearts, would be a sore contradiction. In the one case, as we have seen, we are tried, but cannot, while we have a living faith, be destroyed or overwhelmed. For all things are tempered to them that love God, like the wind to the shorn lamb, so that we can bear them! The Christian's state, at the very worst, is what St. Paul describes—"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." So in the *outward* world we have storms, and lightnings, and earthquakes, and devouring floods. Our enemies are ready, if permission were given, to burst in upon us. But there is a control upon them; and though there be spasms and convulsions of the earth, yet, on the whole, the seasons hold their course, and man reaps the fruit of his labours.

So in the soul of the Christian, taking it on its *better* side, there is, on the whole, a peace which the world did not give and which it cannot take away. There are foretastes of Paradise sometimes, and flashes of heavenly light which beam in upon us from the countenance of Him who hath loved and redeemed us! Just as it is in the world without. Albeit it is so often vexed and deformed with all manner of inclemencies and clouds and storms, which torment the earth and give her no

rest,—it has visions of beauty too; all manner of delights scattered up and down and poured into the senses, which ravish the heart within us with joy! In the first case we clearly discern, nay, taste for a moment, the spiritual joys which God hath laid up for them that love Him, and the peace which the inward soul shall possess in heaven. In the latter, we are likewise reminded, by the gleams of beauty scattered here and there, that bright and glorious beyond imagining will be the *outward* world in which, hereafter, the spirits of the just shall dwell!

You see what I wish to impress upon you is this, that stillness of the waves without will accompany stillness of the waves within. That all things within and without, things material and things spiritual, are parts of the same scheme; that the one are adjusted to the other, and upheld by the same power and mercy,—the Godhead as revealed in Him who ruleth over all things in heaven and earth, even Jesus Christ,—till all things,

and death himself, are put under his feet ! As things are, you can neither change the one nor the other without destroying the harmony which God hath set between them both. A restless marred world and restless earthly hearts must go together. Ere Adam sinned his abode was Paradise, full of delights, and sorrowless as he was sinless ! But the very moment he had transgressed he was driven from the *place of bliss*. It could not abide him, it could not hold him now that he was polluted ! In vain he strove to tarry—it could not be ! It was against the laws of eternal order. And God placed at the gate of the garden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, and kept the way of the tree of life !

Then began the earth to withhold her riches, till labour and the sweat of the brow wrenched it from her furrows ; and the winds and the rains began to beat on the head of the unsheltered man, and the sea to swell, and the storms to rage. The

outward world became, in a moment, the image of the inward. And now all things continue thus till the witness of the gospel has been carried unto all nations, and the number of the saints is full ! Not *till then* can the curse be removed from the earth, nor the restoration of all things in this fallen and eclipsed world be accomplished in the divine Deliverer, in whom heaven and earth are united.

Therefore it is, because all creation groaneth together until now for its final deliverance, that the church of Christ hath ever prayed, and does still pray, that it would please Almighty God to accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom ! And to mark the *peace* and unruffled repose of this inheritance of the saints in light, and to contrast their outward dwelling with their present, the Spirit, in accordance with our whole argument, says thus, “ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth were passed away ; and there

was no more sea." Not only shall there be no inward storm of the soul, no turbulent swellings and roarings of sinful people and nations, such as we behold upon earth, but an angelical abode for angelical spirits, in which sun and moon shall be succeeded by the uncreated light, God himself. The turbulent, unresting elements of our present home shall be replaced by a perfect joy and beauty.

So that not only the souls of the saints shall rejoice, but the very world they dwell in shall seem to be glad and bless its Maker, and thank Him for the garment of peace and glory in which He hath clothed it! Even *now* the holy psalmist would fain call on the elements, the untamed sea itself, to join : " Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is; the round world and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for He cometh to judge the earth!" New heaven and a new earth, and new souls, and new bodies, and all

in love and peace ! What a prize to struggle for ! to wrestle so that we may obtain. And we *shall* obtain it, if so be we keep in faith and love close to Him who is ever with us in this changing and stormy world,—who needeth none to wake Him or to tell Him that without Him we perish ! For He knoweth already, and hath taken us with all his saints into the ark with Him, the ark of his church ; He who, in pain and sorrow, and death and judgment, will rebuke our enemies, and say, as He said to the waves of Gennesareth, “ Peace, be still.”

SERMON X.

DANIEL iii. 16—18.—“ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter! If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king! But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

IT is the duty of the preacher to enlarge upon and enforce the precepts and narratives of scripture. Yet there are some passages in holy writ which are in themselves so exceedingly impressive, which tell their own story so distinctly, and are so constructed to strike home upon the hearts

and souls of those who hear or read them, that he is afraid, even for the most solemn purposes of exhortation, so much as to touch them. They are like a building, framed by some great and wise architect, wherein every stone lies in its own place; and you can neither add nor diminish without marring the beauty or grandeur of the whole.

This narrative of the King of Babylon's golden image, and the grand martyr souls and more than heroism of the three Jewish children, is one of these. The impression it produces when we wish to convey to others the awful lesson it inculcates, and the sublime spirit that moves as a living breath within it, is this ! “ Why or how should I enforce such a noble scripture as this, if the heart and soul are not penetrated by the power of the inspired narrative itself ? The words ought to burn like fire within them that hear them, and transfer, by a holy contagion, something of the faith, and love, and holy courage which they describe,

into them ! All commentary upon them must be idle. If the sword of the Spirit, framed and tempered of heavenly steel, pierces not, of what avail can the preacher's own words be, which are but as a feeble rush in a child's hand in comparison ?" I have often, when the lesson of to-day has come round, intended to address you on it, but I have always, for this reason, given up the thought !

But so it is, indeed, in a greater or less degree, with *all* the word of God ! The most eloquent and spirit-stirring words which ever flowed from men's lips are but as inarticulate sounds, a hollow, tinkling cymbal, compared with the depth, the heart-searchingness, the vivid inworking might which is enfolded in God's word ! Only let it come vehemently enough in collision with men's souls, and, as you see in the stricken flint and steel, the hidden fire will come flashing out of it.

Why is it, then, that all this power is thrown away ? that the word of God is for

ever ringing in men's ears, and strong to penetrate men's souls, and yet is no better than other idle words framed out of wind and human breath? I suppose, because, as water will quench flame, so does the worldly, the unbelieving, and careless soul take off the edge from the word, and quench the spirit. There needs, in fact, as in all things else that move us from without, a preparation, an adaptation of the subject receiving to the thing to be received. And therefore, just as the sun may pour torrents of light upon the blind eye in vain, so do we deal to no purpose with men's souls, unless they too be in some degree opened and awakened.

Thus, by God's blessing, the voice and word of man, and the minister of Christ, may do much. It may excite attention! It may break in upon the listlessness and torpor in which men wrap themselves, and so prepare the way for the working of that which is real life and power—even *the word of God*. It is still,

therefore, with the preacher as with the Baptist, when he became Christ's herald. He is not the Christ, but he makes ready for Him! “*Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*” So say we. “O brethren, Hear ye God's word which we declare to you.” “God speaketh, let the whole world hear and keep silence before Him.” “Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts.” May God open, this day, our ears to hear, and our thoughts to understand, and our hearts to receive his word and will.

Now, the first thing which strikes us in the history of the three children, is some astonishment that Nebuchadnezzar should have issued such a command to the peoples and nations, or have set up at all an idol image. For it was only, in the chapter before, that we read of his worshipping Daniel, after the interpretation of his marvellous and prophetic dream. Nay, being wonder-struck by such a proof of a divine spirit, he confessed and said

to the inspired man, “ Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of lords, and a revealer of spirits.” Here is a clear acknowledgment of the true God. But, though it is not so said in the history, many years might have elapsed between the two events ! The marvel had died away. The great king’s heart, after being shaken to and fro, as by a mighty wind, had come back again to its old standing-place, self-rooted, self-resting, self-sustaining ! Or any how, even if this great sin and act of infidel tyranny followed *very soon* upon his confession of the one true God, it is only what one might expect from the corruption of human nature.

The truth is, that, though an angel, or *some higher* intelligence might safely bear great riches, or power, or grandeur, yet that men, as they are, *cannot* bear it. They have not wisdom enough, or holy humility and faith enough ! It corrupts their hearts. It turns their heads. It swells up the soul with the wind of pride,

bloated and hollow. As if our riches and grandeur were our own making, and we had changed ourselves into a kind of gods. For as men, on these pinnacles of greatness, see the world stretched beneath their feet, they cannot bear, when they look up, to have a *heaven* above their heads. Whilst they despise mankind, therefore, they deny God. As I said, they claim independence, and make themselves *gods*! It is not, however, that grandeur and riches *beget* these feelings, and this insanity of pride and self-confidence. On the contrary, they find them ready made. In the seed, at least, they lie in the hearts of us all. Power only makes them sprout, and grow, till, like the mustard-seed in our Lord's parable, they become a tree and shoot forth great branches, and the better parts of our soul lie withering under the shadow of them. So it was with Nebuchadnezzar.

He was a great king ; he had conquered the nations, and bruised them with a rod

of iron ! Like Sennacherib he had digged and drank water, and with the sole of his feet had he dried up all the rivers of the besieged places ! He knew not that God had raised him up for a scourge upon the nations, and that his hook was in his nose and his bridle was in his lips, to turn him whithersoever it seemed Him good ! No, His grandeur was nothing if it could not be his own making. And so enrooted, and entwisted with his self-trusting, blasphemous heart was this fond and frantic pride, that, even after this lesson of the power of Him that made heaven and earth, you find that it burst forth again, like a torrent that *will* find its way, and brought down upon Him the visible fierceness of the wrath of God.

At the end of twelve months, we are told that he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. And from its lofty terraces, he looked down upon the great river, the river Euphrates, which he had bridled with bridges; and upon the magnifi-

cent city of Babylon which he had builded, with its brazen gates, and battlemented walls, and the towers and the temples within it, which he had lifted up to heaven! His heart waxed mad with pride at the sight, and these great swelling words, *tossing* themselves, so to say, up to the clouds, came from his lips, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” While the word was yet in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, “The *kingdom* is *departed from thee*.” Then was he deprived of his senses, and was driven out, king of kings as he was, to feed among the beasts of the field.

All this, then, will enable you to understand the character of Nebuchadnezzar, who is only, after all, an *enlarged image* of our common prideful human nature! He acted from vanity and the passion of dis-

playing his almighty ness, as he deemed it to be, in the face of heaven and earth ; It was to enjoy that intoxicating feeling of the soul which is engendered by the contemplation of our own greatness, that he set up this golden image in the plains of Dura. He was resolved, not only to have the political obedience of his innumerable subjects, but to make himself, as others have done, a tyrant over souls, and to prescribe whom they were to worship ! Nay, if we are to judge from what followed, he was *jealous* of that honour and exclusive adoration which the Jewish captives paid to the one true God. It was so much taken from himself. It was so much independence of heart and soul which limited his empire over men. He was resolved, therefore, to crush and grind it down. At least, without this, it is difficult to understand why such terrible threats should have been added against those who should refuse to bow the knee to the image. There was no fear, truly,

that idolatrous people, as were the rest of his subjects, would do other than he commanded. Nay, of a certainty they would rejoice and triumph in the idolatrous festival, with its pomp, and ravishments to the eye and ear!

Accordingly the brazen gates of the city were opened, and the expectant multitudes, by thousands and tens of thousands, came flocking out into the great plain. It was all crowded and waving to and fro with living men, just as a field of grass or corn waves in the wind! You might think that almost all the race of men was collected together, the multitudes are so vast. In the midst, raised high up on a pillar into the air, was the Idol of gold, gleaming and glittering in the sun's rays a long way off, as if a real glory to dazzle men's eyes were thrown round about it. You might have said that the sun himself had come down to clothe his idol! And then there came rushing into men's ears and souls, the sound of innumerable instruments of

music, the cornet, and flute, and harp, and sackbut, and psaltery mingling and crashing, and dizzying men's senses with the sort of madness which music inspires, when joined with what dazzles the eye ! And in a moment those innumerable multitudes, moved by one spirit and irresistible impulse, men and women and children, fell down before the God of Nebuchadnezzar, and worshipped the golden image which he had set up ! Should *we* have done the same ? I trust that God would have given us strength and faith not to have done so ! But, you must yourselves feel and know, on a thousand occasions, how hard it is to resist the example even of a few about you ! And in the sayings and doings of a great multitude, when we ourselves form one of them, there is a strange and wonderful power which works upon us we know not how ! There is an almost irresistible sympathy, a *slavish* instinct of imitation which compels us, whether we will or not, to join

the living mass, into the midst of which we are thrown. We are as a part of one huge body, and our hearts and innermost fibres respond to its motion. I am sure, that, *involuntarily*, without wishing it, without knowing it, I can imagine, on such an occasion as that we are describing, how men of the stoutest resolution might kneel, from the powerful impulse of the moment, along with the kneeling multitude. It would be no more than natural.

But however this might be, there were three men, three *young* men, who were found bold enough to disobey ! They knelt not, they stood upright among the prostrate. Yet they could not have imagined that the king would relent. Why the very looks of an angry eastern king are looks of death. Every gleam of his wrathful eye blights and blasts what it falls upon. There is no interval between the vindictive word and the bloody deed. So it was here. The king demands if the charge be true, and they confess it.

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed, against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and he commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. They were not shaken ! Yet, might not the tempter have whispered,—in the guise which now-a-days he often wears, that of a cautious, plausible man of worldly sense—nay, did he not actually whisper to these men,—" Why should you stand alone on this great festival day, when all the world is glad ? Why should you offend the prejudices of these enthusiastic multitudes, who, whether right or wrong, are of one heart and mind ? Surely you are about to commit what is clear self-murder. Three unprotected men, you are throwing yourselves in the way of a wrathful and irresistible force, which will grind you to powder. You might as easily stop a mill-wheel or a driven chariot with your hands, as check this idolatry. *Two or three*, more or less, cannot matter : you

cannot change them, and you will destroy yourselves! Be sure that the God whom you serve is too reasonable to expect such an idle and fruitless sacrifice. Besides, though you do kneel, it is true, to an idol, it is only *the act of a moment*. It is a mere outward act to which your soul consents not. You are only yielding to *necessity*. Kneel, kneel, and do not slay your selves, like fanatics or madmen!" All this, as the world goes, is good sense and calm reason in such circumstances!

Again, the aspect of the grim furnace red hot, and shooting out flames on all sides, suggested its own pleadings and reasons. "Look at it," the heart would say, "how can men's bodies dwell in the midst of such terrible burnings? How is such a maddening torture to be endured by your tender flesh and blood? Ordinary pain, or disgrace, or dishonour might be borne. But this anguish of seven-fold fire, it is impossible that God should require it of you; kneel down to the idol

ere the flames lay hold of you!" This too sounds very plausible and rational.

But there was still another and peculiar temptation, coming under the fairest and best seeming guise imaginable, to which these young men were exposed. And there are no temptations half so dangerous as those, which, by any subtlety, can be disguised under the form of duty of whatsoever sort. Satan is worst as an angel of light. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, though Jews, were great *officers of state*. They had been, like Daniel, advanced to high dignity in the province of Babylon. They might, therefore, have said, "In the first place the king is our friend. He has advanced us to honour! He does not usually interfere with our religious principles! This is only a solitary act, a vehement but passing caprice, to show his power! Will it not be ungrateful to thwart him? Secondly: our countrymen are slaves. They derive the protection which they now enjoy, in a great measure

from the dignity and influence with which the king has clothed us. Should we raise a prejudice against us, in the mind of our master, and, still more, if by opposing such an iron will as his we bring destruction on our heads, our ruin will rebound on our innocent countrymen. Thus our captive kinsmen will be persecuted. We care not for ourselves, but, for their sakes, we must obey! God will make allowance for the motive, and forgive us the enforced wrong, and involuntary idolatry." This too, seems *reasonable*, nay, *good*.

The multitude, the safety of their countrymen, the angry countenance of the king, the raging, devouring furnace,— all was present to the three saints, and yet they were not shaken! Neither as a demon of darkness nor an angel of light did the tempter move them.

It is, moreover, perfectly clear, that if there had been a hundred Nebuchadnezzars, and a thousand furnaces of fire in

one, nay, if the whole globe under their feet and the heaven above their heads had been falling to pieces about them, they would still have been utterly unshaken and unsubdued. Why? not because they were of iron and not of flesh and blood, insensible to pain and torture; no, they were men like other men! But because they feared God! And God therefore held them up in his everlasting arms, and they knew, and were inwardly conscious, that He was in them, and about them, and under them! By faith their eyes beheld stedfastly the *Invisible!* They had laid hold on the Almighty, and so they were not dismayed at the visage of the tyrant, or the violence of the fire, and fought the good fight against the fury of man and the destroying power of the elements! This is grand! however you take it.

But the grandest, noblest thing of all is *their calmness*. There is no hurry, no perturbation, no struggle of weakness with strength, of the flesh with the spirit, no enthusiastic

elation, but a simple, tranquil greatness and firmness, as still and deep as heaven itself. Whilst exercising the noblest act of faith on record, they speak as men ever do who live really in the love and fear of God ; they speak as though they were doing the most simple and natural thing in the world. So much without effort does that greatness of soul act, which the Spirit of God gives to them who truly love and serve Him ! “ O Nebuchadnezzar,” they say, “ we are not *careful* to answer thee in this matter ! If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king ! But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up ! ”

And now what is the end of all this ? are we to look at it, as men are inclined to do, as a grand and stirring tale in a book, or a fine scene in a play, with which, save so far as it moves us for a moment,

we have nothing to do? I say, God forbid! For we have much, every way, to do with what we have read, and the truth which it conveys. And the solemn lesson which, from God himself, it utters to us, is just as binding, and just as necessary to every christian soul, as it was on that day to the three Jewish youths upon the plains of Dura! A sense and profound feeling that so it is, may the Holy Spirit bring home upon all our souls in answer to our earnest prayer! For as I began by saying, no human speech or teaching of its own strength can do so.

Behold, then, the vision, my brethren, and the interpretation thereof. The plain of Dura, stretching wide, all round about us, is the *world*, with all its busy multitudes, keeping holiday, and rejoicing in present pleasures, which tempt us to touch, and taste, and grasp what the God of it offers to us. In the midst is set up, by that regal voice and authority which

men like to attribute to the multitude as well as to kings, the golden and glittering image which it is its pleasure to worship. That is the *image of itself!* It is itself that the world worships.

As to the multitude at Dura the image presented many diversities of appearance as the spectators looked at it from this side or that, more nearly or more distantly, more or less in the sun's rays, yet was still the self-same image; so it is with the world! It may be lust, or drunkenness, or idle childish vanities, or an easy indifference to the stirring and painful thoughts of eternity; or power, or wealth, or the golden beams of knowledge glancing on it from on high. It may be this or that, or a thousand things besides, according to the varying tastes, and passions, and feelings of those who look up to it, and worship it, but it is still the self-same image.

And in the midst of the multitude, few in number, like the Jewish martyr-youths,

are placed the servants of God, often in grievous trial and temptation. And the world hath command in its voice, and will fain be obeyed like the king of Babylon. And it says, "We are the multitude, and therefore we are they who ought to reign. You must think and do even as we. You have no right to set yourselves apart, and talk about a King and Saviour invisible, and to live above the things that are seen, and, with a credulous faith and foolish enthusiasm, devote heart and soul to that which, whether it comes hereafter or no, is nothing worth upon earth, and can neither feed, nor clothe, nor gladden you! Bow down before the image which we have set up!"

And then the world has its fiery furnace too! In the first times real flames. And still, not unoften, divers persecutions and unkindnesses. And if we will not fall down and worship, its countenance, like that of the Babylonish king, is changed, and it gives us hard names, and casts us

into such a furnace as it may still command to throw its enemies in! At any rate, it talks like a tyrant, and *must* be obeyed ! And it *is obeyed*. It hath, and it ever hath had, and, till heaven and earth are made anew in the regeneration of all things, it ever will have, more worshippers than the living and unseen God,—God manifest to us through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

And to make its commands more acceptable to our corrupt nature, it is, to those who will follow with it, kind and indulgent. Yea, with much mirth, and laughter, and lightheartedness does the world move along ; and there is the sound of the harp and the psaltery, all kinds of winning and bewitching temptations to lay hold upon the senses, and dissolve the heart's strength and firmness ! And so it is that, though men's *actual world*, those whom they see and know, are not countless multitudes, but perhaps ten or a score of friends, yet the *very voice of the whole*

world seems to speak in them and through them. So we tremble at an empty shadow which, if we had the courage to touch it, would be found to be emptiness and nothing ! The world says so. The world does so, and I only do as others do ! And thus, if the world wills it, we worship after all, not *images of gold*, but of clay and dust, and made of all vile and earthly things. We are content to do as others do, and to tread the broad and pleasant way that leadeth to the chambers of death, if so be that we have crowd enough to keep us company, and sustain our spirits to their height ! “ Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat ! Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it ! ”

But how can we resist ? how can we bear up against the world and the world’s king, the prince of the powers of the air, who reigneth in the hearts of the children

of disobedience? Only by grasping fast hold, through faith, which is the soul's hand, of the *invisible and eternal!* Only by resting the whole soul, its confidence, its joys, its hopes, its everything, upon Him who hath power and will to deliver, to the uttermost, all them who put their trust in Him! "Be of good cheer!" he says, "I have overcome the world!" "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith."

Of course, come what will, we cannot and dare not do as others do who have *not* this hope in them! Nor does it avail to throw pearls before swine, and to strive to explain to reluctant ears, and hearts without understanding, and affections which are of the world, all the reasons of the faith that is in us! The world and they who are of it understand it not. We can only say, "We cannot and will not go with you, or do as you do! We fear God, and we *dare* not do so. We love Him, and we *would* not, even if we dared. In one

word, we are not careful to answer you in this matter ! But be it known to you, that we will not serve your God, nor worship the golden image which you have set up !

SERMON XI.

DANIEL iii. 24.—“ Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

THE burning fiery furnace, then, did not consume its intended prey. And yet the three servants of God had not braved the deadly rage of the king, and the violence of the fire, because they took it for certain that He would deliver them from the furnace! They knew not whether He would or no! But because He was their Lord, and their God, and would be their

exceeding great reward, even if their mortal bodies were consumed! If it were his will, they knew that He *could* save them. Whether it would be his will or not, they left to Him! Any how, whether they lived or died, they were content to be his, and He would be theirs! But it was God's pleasure to put forth his right hand and to deliver them. He tamed the fires, as he stopped, afterwards, the mouths of the lions! Now, therefore, was fulfilled to the very letter the gracious promise of the prophet, "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame *kindle* upon thee!" Faith quenched the fiery darts of the wicked, and the violence of the fire, and they walked to and fro in the midst, in the very heart of the furnace! And yet the outskirts of the smoke and flames had just before consumed in an instant the mighty men who had cast them in! A marvellous sight it must have been to behold the martyrs walking in the place

of their torment, with their bonds unloosed; as though the sulphurous breath of the furnace had been the gales of paradise, and the overarching flames a stately regal chamber.

Thus did they return into the world of living men, with a consecration upon them as the monuments of the power and mercy of God. No more like their brethren, but to be pointed at by the finger as they who had dwelt amidst the burning, and had received no hurt. “Ye servants of the living God, come forth,—and they came forth.” Not even so much as the smell of fire had passed upon them, nor was a single *hair of their head* singed. And this was more striking to them who witnessed it than to us. The Chaldeans worshipped the fire, and it was putting the same shame upon their God as when the image of Dagon fell down maimed before the ark! For God’s voice not only rules the water-flood, but divideth the flames of fire; and he smiteth and crusheth the idols!

And certainly we cannot read this deliverance without thinking of our Lord's promise to his suffering disciples, "*There shall not a hair of your head perish!*" Though there were hundreds of years between that promise and this deliverance of God's saints, yet clearly they are of the same order! There was the same faith in them that were doomed to suffer, the same love and watchfulness in Him for whom they gave their bodies to the burning! There are not two Gods, or two Lords, or two faiths; but one Lord, and one faith, and one God, and Father of us all,—and one mighty Mediator, from the beginning till now, through whom he works to save and to destroy! And was not *He* present in the furnace, and did not the flames know Him, and obey Him, as the waters did when He said, *Peace! be still!* And did he not speak unutterable words to the heroical and saintly youths, and did they not behold his face, and were glad, till the flaming furnace

was to them as heaven, and the seats of the blessed? It may have been so. One is inclined to think and say it was so. And if it were only an angel, it was an angel from Him, a ministering spirit discharging his work, and representing his person and special office of deliverance! “Lo! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” “Behold, I am *with you always*,” saith Christ. “I see heaven opened,” said the martyr Stephen; heaven and earth being brought close together to his eyes, and the intervening gulf overpassed! “I see heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God!” And they looked upon his face, we are told, and a glory from above had fallen upon it, till, like his Lord’s, it was transfigured, and it was, though yet in the flesh, as the face of an angel.

“But then,” it may be said, “there is this great difference between these elder

saints, and the martyrs of Christ. The flames, and the lions devoured not the one ; the rage of cruel men destroyed the other. The sight of Christ might have comforted, but did not save !” I reply, that the difference is only apparent and superficial ! The spirit and reality of the thing are the very same. It was not so much for the sake of the saints, but for his holy name’s sake, and to rebuke the pride of the king and the idolatry of the people, that He here visibly tamed the furnace of fire ! The same evidence of accompanying power was just as visibly exerted, though in *another form*, when, in the Gospel saints and apostles, he made the virtue of healing and streams of life issue forth from them, though he did not protect them from the contumelies and oppressions of wicked men. A leper cleansed, or a man raised from the dead, was as good an evidence of power as a furnace quenched, or a tyrant foiled.

2. After all, the smallest part of God’s

love to the three Jewish youths was their rescue from the material flames ! That endured but for a moment, and saved not their hearts from sorrow, in after time, nor their bodies from decay ! The true blessing was the *assurance* of the love of their God, and the glorious and immortal hope which sustained their souls ! They knew they should enjoy the fulness of Him who giveth *himself* to them that love Him, and who is the God, not of the dead, *but of the living !* It was therefore, as their own words declare, not the expectation of a present deliverance, but of future glory, which made them valiant soldiers of God.

3. The ancient prophets, moreover, before and since, like the apostles of the Lord afterwards, testified to God's glory, not only, as here, by being delivered from the power of persecution or the rage of the elements, but by dying triumphantly, in faith, and heavenly hope. And not only prophets, but weak and tender women

too, even under the law, bore the same testimony of faith, in the sure and certain hope of a better resurrection ! Nobly spake the mother in the book of Macca-bees, when she exhorted her sixth and last son to hold fast by the faith of his fathers, and, like his martyred brethren, to endure the fire to the uttermost, rather than submit to the godless oppressor who called on them to sacrifice to idols. "O my son," she said, "have pity upon me that bare thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age ! I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and consider that God made them. Fear not this tormentor ; but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren." That I may receive thee again, she meant, at the day of resurrection, and in the place of glory ! This, you see, is the *faith evangelical* ; the self-same spirit working as under the

Gospel, whether God delivered or not. The faith itself was a miracle, a thing not of this world.

4. When a persecutor condemns God's saints to the sword, or to the fire, he means it as a punishment! To his carnal thoughts to die by a cruel death is the greatest of woes; to have the earthly life within us cut short is the most real of possible sorrows! But, if God makes it only the gate through which, by a single leap as it were, the spirits of the just pass into their glory, and exchange the darkness and sorrows of this world for the light of his countenance, He quite as much, nay *more*, rescues his beloved as if He turned the sword's point into a rush, and the breath of the furnace into pleasant gales! Either way, He equally laughs to scorn out of heaven the malice of the wicked! Since the immortal soul within us is the precious thing of all, since our bodies crumble, and the world in which we live shall itself vanish like smoke,

temporal deliverances are only important, as they promote or prefigure to the eye of faith, that final rescue from sin and misery, which is the inheritance of the people of God. And, just as the forms and rites of the ancient covenant were only the shadow of good things to come,—even of the graces and spiritual realities of the Gospel,—so the outward bodily deliverances, under the law, have the same value, and no more ! They are the *mere* images, and shadows of that which alone to perishing sinners is substantial and real—the eternal deliverance of the soul from sin and death.

When, therefore, our Lord tells his servants, that, in his watchful and tender care for them, not so much as a hair of their heads shall be injured ; and when He means thereby, not that their *bodies* shall take no hurt and be as brass or adamant, but that the living real man, the *soul*, shall not be harmed, He is not, as may seem to worldly minds, exchanging a higher deliver-

ance for a lower! He does just the contrary, and changes *a lower for a higher!* And when you come to think of it, what a marvellous promise this is, that all things, whether outwardly and visibly evil or not, shall be overruled for good to the souls of them that love God! So that in proportion as the power of sin decays within us, even this changing, tossing, scornful world, by the might of faith, becomes to us an abode already of almost unmixed joy, and present glory! *There is no evil to us*, no grief or calamity, as men usually count and speak of them. It becomes changed to the soul, exactly as the vilest stones on the ground become bright and lustrous when the sun falls upon them. Nay, it is already in the world spiritual as it would be in the world outward, if on a sudden, at the word of God, the rough rude rocks and dust under our feet were changed into precious gems and jewels, with light and glory in them and about them, like the

walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. In fact, where there is faith and love, all things, even the sharpest sorrows, become instruments of implanting divine graces ! They show us more of God and God's dealings, more of the glories of the Gospel, more of the depths of love and mercy which are laid up in it for those who come to Him in Christ Jesus ! This is one of the great mysteries of the Gospel. It is one of those *constant* miracles which sound strange and utterly unintelligible to the ears and hearts of unconverted men, and which they just as little believe, as that God would save them from the flood or from the fire.

And yet, it is no strange thing to them who love and serve God, but a matter of constant experience. It is a solid, unmistakeable fact, of which they are just as certain as of the things which their hands handle. To be sure, a worldly man may say, "afflictions and sorrows, any how, must be *borne* ; and we bear them too !"

Yes, you bear them as sullen and strong-hearted men endure oppression from other men—men great and powerful whom they cannot resist. They brace and harden up the heart against it, till, though outwardly overcome, the inward soul waxes like stone or iron, which cannot be broken! They are made strong and enduring by pride, and the sense of wrong, and the inward suppressed wrath! Or you bear them with that sort of indifference which is engendered by the feeling that certain evils are inevitable, and by the habitual effort to turn the thoughts away to other things. The affliction is endured, but the feelings are blunted, and the heart is hardened! And so it is, that, in those evils of life, which are as a furnace to the soul, the heart rebels, and counts them as acts of power and oppression which God, in a sort of wanton tyranny, imposes on his creatures. And we endure them just in the same spirit as we should support the like amount of evil from our fellow-

men—with a fierce reluctance—sullenly or stupidly. Not so the servants of God ! When the heart is really powerfully moved and changed by divine grace, it is not *mere submission*. It is a meek and loving resignation. It is a conforming of our own will to the will of our heavenly Father, not as *the stronger*, but as the better and the wiser, who, even in sorrow, is only doing, under another form, the work of love. Nay, more than this. There is an actual *rejoicing* in tribulation, because they know that whom God loveth he *chasteneth*, and that they are not sons if he does not discipline them ! They embrace, therefore, afflictions with both their arms and all their heart, as penitent men do their sackcloth and ashes ! It is like drinking draughts of refreshing wine out of a cup of base materials ! A cordial from an earthen vessel is better than poison out of a goblet of gold.

But I will go a step farther, which will make what I have said perhaps less unin-

telligible to those who have neither experienced in themselves, nor witnessed in others, the spirit I have been describing ! It may be, and is, very difficult to sustain an evil *alone*, without hardening up the strong and prideful heart, in order to resist it. And, so far as the world is concerned, however strong and affectionate the sympathy of friends may be, a perfect sharing of the inward grief there cannot be. The heart *alone*, after all, knoweth its *own* bitterness ! And the innermost soul dwelleth in a solitude which cannot be reached. But here is the vantage-ground of God's saints. Here is the secret of what were otherwise so mysterious and difficult to understand. *They are not alone.* There remaineth not, at the bottom of their hearts, that feeling, more or less, of loneliness which attaches even to the most deeply and affectionately shared of mere earthly sorrows. In their very innermost soul, far down and down into those depths which no earthly eye or

knowledge can reach, they have a *companion*. The Son of God is with them! "Did we not cast *three* men bound into the midst of the fire? But I see *four* men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the *fourth* is like the Son of God." So what the outward eye seeth is perhaps a solitary man, over whom the waves of trouble sweep heavily, a man of many griefs and sorrows, perhaps without earthly friends, or outward support, condemned to endure his lot in loneliness and solitude. But the eye of faith beholdeth not one, but *two*. And the form of the one is bright and glorious, and his raiment is of the colours of heaven, and his countenance is as the sun when he shineth in his strength! It is *the Son of God*! It is *Christ the Lord*! And when the steps of the earthly mourner are feeble and totter, he takes him up in his arms, and lifteth him up, as a shepherd does a weary lamb, over the rough places. And he wipes the tears from his eyes,

and pours freshening floods of life into the fainting heart ! He points out in the distance the glorious towers of Mount Zion, and the pilgrim looks up and sees the countenance of Him who was once dead, but is now alive again ! And the glory of it passes into his soul, and his very face, like the face of Stephen, becomes like the face of an angel !

You see, dear brethren, there is no mystery in it now ! When we are in the furnace, Christ is with us ! He who is the resurrection and the life, and from whom the streams of life and joy gush continually, is our companion, and subdueth the flames, and maketh them durable.

Hence it is that Christ commands his disciples to rejoice and be exceeding glad when men should persecute them even unto the death ! Hence when Peter and John were summoned before the high priest at Jerusalem, they *rejoiced* and returned thanks to God that they had been

thought worthy to suffer for his name's sake! Hence it is that you can hardly read a single page of St. Paul without finding him speaking, both in himself, and in others, of triumph in troubles, and of rejoicing in tribulation, as the every day experience, and the unquestionable privilege of Christians. And so it was. You find in that and in other ages, when God has let loose the powers of darkness and the flames of persecution, martyrs going to the stake or the pile, not in mourning and tears, but like a bridegroom to his marriage! Nay, even in the midst of the flames, you behold them singing hymns to God, and, while the Spirit triumphed over the flesh, manifestly drinking deep of the joys of the kingdom of heaven! Their glory and bliss were begun even in the flames! There stood one by them, though the wicked beheld Him not, and his form was like the Son of God.

And if you say, that the contemplation of saints and martyrs, with Christ up-

holding and strengthening them, is indeed a noble sight!—that it makes the heart swell within us, at the power and glory of faith, and the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, but that it has nothing *practical* for us, I answer, God forbid that we should think so! For, albeit neither I nor you may ever be called to pass through the fire, yet are there *furnaces* as trying to the soul as fire, into some of which *all* of us must be cast, and to *every one* of which, perhaps, *some* among us will be exposed. Pray always, that you may come forth from them, as silver and gold, which, though seven times tried, are ever the purer for the fire. And, indeed, He with whom we have to do, is himself such a searching, penetrating power! He sitteth as a refiner and purifier of silver. And He shall purify the sons of men, and purge them as gold and silver. Who may abide the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he appeareth?

In the first place, then, there is sickness, sometimes sore and racking pains of body, where the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint! Every now and then, long years of cruel pain, in which the life of the body is no life, no joyous inward sense of being, but a lingering death! Many and many are they, whose souls are *consumed* in this furnace. They are not purified. They are not unharmed. The searching fire tries them. They are as stubble and perish! Others there are, and I have seen them, from whose souls this trial has only driven out what remained of dross, and was *destructible*, leaving behind the converted and purified soul! And sometimes not only the language, but the countenance of such sufferers, is not that of year-long pains, and wearing agonies, but as though the breath of life were unmixed joy, and they lay on a bed of roses. Christ is with them, and watcheth over them, and their eyes have been opened, and they see and know Him, and

they rejoice in that which has brought Him down from heaven to visit them.

Then, there are earthly afflictions of another kind ; loss of goods, unkindness of friends, and so on. They too, are a furnace to try men's souls in. But you are exempt from these, at any rate as yet, and you expect always to be so ! I answer, so much the worse for you, if so you are.

But, thirdly, at all events, there are two heart-searching sorrows which none of us can escape. Those who are dearest to us *must* die. However hard of heart a man may be, yet, if he be a man, this at least will search the soul, and open the fountain of tears ! Who can stand beside us then ? there is none but Christ who hath the power to do so, none but Christ who hath the will ! Alas ! for lack of Him, and the faith to bring Him down, many souls are consumed in this furnace ! But even then, **BLESSED** are those, who seeing them whom they love die in the Lord, have themselves the faith to see Him who re-

ceiveth the souls of his servants ! "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord !" Believe me, that even here, there is more of heavenly joy than earthly sorrow. Tears, indeed, of the eye there are, and bitterness of the heart; for we are but flesh and blood ; but still, mixed with this, the sense and hope of bliss with God breaks through the tears, and brightens the grief. Very deep and solemn and sobering, but very true and real is the inward joy which filleth the heart in sorrow. There is one with us, and his form is that of the Son of God.

At all events, we must all die, EACH for ourselves ; alone in an awful, naked solitude, must we tread the valley of the shadow of death ! Is not this a furnace to consume ? the knees quake, and the heart sinketh at the thought of it ! Be thou with us, O gracious Saviour, so that we may see and know thee, and guide us, with thine hand, through the blackness

of darkness to life everlasting ! O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ?

And this brings me to the last point. I have said that the saints' deliverances are *spiritual* deliverances, and that, though glorious proofs alike of God's love and almighty goodness, they do not, in their fulness, meet the eyes and senses of men, in the same manner as the rescue of the three children out of the burning fiery furnace was forced upon and witnessed by the king of Babylon ! We now live by *faith*. We do not with our very eyes behold the things which we verily believe, and which, though unseen, are the soul's life, and, like God himself, eternal ! But the world unto which we are hastening will be a *world of sight*. As we see sun and moon and men now, we shall behold God and Christ, heaven and hell, angels and devils, then ! It is the fixed counsel of God, that the same deliverance which He now effectually, but secretly, worketh upon the souls of

his saints, should be as plainly exhibited in the sight of the universe, as ever it was in the plains of Babylon before Nebuchadnezzar. At the last day, when God cometh to judgment, will the furnace be kindled by the breath of his fury,—Christ will descend in burning fire ! “ Yet once it is a little while, and I will *shake* the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. Behold, behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, saith the Lord ! ” “ The heavens and the earth that are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. And the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night ! In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up ! ” Who will deliver us, in that day ? Where is He who shall save us from the hand of God, and the wrath and blackness and the world of

everlasting burnings ? We shall have bodies, who will protect them ? we shall have souls, who will save them ?

Then, indeed, shall be seen who are God's. The same universal dissolution which shall present to them who have not loved God such a horror and anguish, as a world broken to pieces may well create in those who are involved in its ruin, shall be to the saints of God the building up of their eternal home ! The flames which to the wicked shall seem, as they are, the conflagration of a world of sin, shall be to *them* the bright and glorious dawning of the Sun of righteousness. The fire shall have no power on them, nor shall a hair of their head be touched, for the Lord is with them, who delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fire, because they trusted in Him, and yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any God, except their own God !

SERMON XII.

MARK v. 43.—“ When she heard of Jesus, she came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.”

HERE we have a striking example of the power of faith, and of the blessings which, throughout his ministry upon earth, as well as since his ascension into heaven, our Lord bestows upon it. The form, indeed, in which this realizing of the things unseen exhibits itself is varied in every possible way, and with every diversity of circumstances which men’s wants and tem-

pers admit ! But the thing abideth the same, and wherever the living principle is found that unites the soul to Christ, fainter or stronger as it may be, there, immediately and invariably, we find the gracious and powerful fruits of it to follow.

It is so with the poor trembling woman who has thus a place in the glorious company of those who are held forth as examples in the gospel unto the world's end. She had been afflicted by a grievous disease for many years. She had had recourse to many physicians, but the art of man could devise no cure. The overflowing fountain of her blood remained unstaunch'd. Of a sudden she hears of the glorious cures and holy character of Jesus. Her heart leaps forth to embrace this new hope ! With all her infirmities about her, weak, perhaps, and hardly able to stand, she mingles among the multitudes who are accompanying their Saviour in his way to heal the ruler's daughter. She comes timidly behind and reaches out her hand

in order to touch Him,—yet not Him, but his garment, anything that belonged to Him! For she felt assured that, could she but reach the outermost hem of his vesture, it would cure her of her plague.

But except that we are certain of her vivid, confident faith in the power, and sanctity, and divine character of the Lord, we cannot tell exactly what her feelings and thoughts were! Why did she act exactly as she did? Why did she come *behind* Him? Why did she not address a prayer to Him? Why did she shrink from view? It might have been that she dreaded to expose either to men's eyes or ears the grievous plague from which she suffered! It might have been that, along with her faith, there was a spirit of modesty and humility about her which had a sort of horror of directly encountering the eye of the Holy One, from the outgoing of whose overflowing power she confidently anticipated her cure.

It might be that her trust was more

strong than *distinct*, touching our Lord's person, and the healing energy that went forth out of Him ! She looked upon Him, earthly body and all, as a vessel of glorious gifts, brimful of mercies and miraculous activities, out of which spontaneous virtue issued to all who could approach it, as naturally as the power of a healing spring diffuses itself through those who taste of it. She would almost seem to have forgotten that our Lord was a person, and not merely an *instrument* of healing. That He had a will and knowledge, and restrained or sent forth, at his own pleasure, the mercy to body and soul that was treasured up in Him ! The one thought that possessed her soul was, how to get near Him and to come in *contact* with the vehicle of healing. How she must have trembled with joy and expectation when she drew nigh enough and put forth her eager hand ! And she was not disappointed. There shot through her diseased flesh, in an instant, a stream of sensible power, gushing

out from Him ! In a moment she felt a change ! She was conscious that she was made whole.

But in one respect she was wrong ! She fancied that she had *stolen* the blessing, that she had escaped observation ! She was hastening away, treasuring up in her own bosom the secret of her marvellous success ! But whilst the All-merciful had permitted the forces of healing to go out of Him, the All-seeing had beheld her. He had not only traced her step by step in the crowd, but He had seen her inmost thoughts long before, and discerned the secrets of the heart. But He must be recognised by her, not as a fountain of magical virtue, but as a voluntary healer, prescribing his own conditions, and showing mercy and compassion upon them that believe. Neither must she be afraid to testify, before the eyes of the multitude, to the mercies which she had received.

And so it was ! For Jesus, we are told, immediately knowing within himself that

virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, *Who touched me?* Little did his disciples enter into his thoughts or comprehend the All-knowing, and All-seeing, and the purport of his question. For they said to Him, in a sort of half-rebuke, “Thou seest the multitude thronging thee and sayest thou, Who touched me?” And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing! But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. And he said unto her, “Daughter! thy faith hath made thee whole! Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.”

And now, for the spiritual lessons conveyed to us in the sacred narrative!

1. Our blessed Lord is the *centre* and sole fountain, at least to men, of all power and mercy! All the manifold gifts of healing and restoration issue from Him. He it is to whom the secret wishes and unfulfilled

longings of the soul, or, at any rate, the crying necessities of God's creatures in this lower world, are for ever tending and pointing. They may not know what they want ! The cry for help, in the lips or in the heart, may be more or less articulate, more or less intelligent, but they desire a healer ! They sigh and groan for some healing power which shall shoot and penetrate through all things, as the sun pervades and illuminates the firmament, turning, at a stroke, darkness into light ! So that at its touch, the sickly and diseased frame of nature, souls and bodies, and the ruined outward world which testifies that the plague is on it as well as on the spirits of men, may again be whole ! In one word, our souls are diseased, our bodies are diseased, and so are all things within us and without us ! and Christ alone is the physician !

2. Moreover, the graces, and mercies, and energies which reside within Him, are not, if we may so say, conferred upon Him

from without. They are not poured into Him without having belonged to Him before, as we pour some precious beverage into a cup which thus becomes sparkling and full, not by its own virtue, but because we have poured into it what it did not contain before. What has been put within it may be taken out, and the cup again become empty, without power or refreshment in it. Such indeed were the prophets and mighty messengers of God in ancient times. Such are the saints now, whom the Spirit sanctifieth and crowneth their inward soul with precious gifts and graces. They are *vessels of grace*. But what they contain is limited, and, after all, is of scanty measure, sometimes more, sometimes less. But any how, nothing in comparison with the almighty and infinite Sanctifier.

3. God, moreover, may take away what He has given, and leave, if it be his good will, the earthen vessel in its original worthlessness ! But Christ is not a vessel, but a *fountain*, from which the fresh and

living waters are for ever bubbling and flowing. It hath no end, and however much be drawn from it, it is still undiminished. You have before now seen, perhaps, such perennial springs in some hill-side. On, and on, and on for ever, as it seems, the leaping, sparkling water goes its way. Whence comes it? you cannot see—but surely from some deep cavern under ground, or far in the side of the mountain, which is fed by rain and dews and dark depths of hidden waters, beyond men's eyes to discern. All that you know is, that out of those mysterious and invisible store-houses the waters are ever gushing. So it is in Christ. There are in Him immeasurable depths and undiscoverable greatnesses and infinities, out of which are, for evermore, issuing power, and mercies, and healings, and creations of things new, and restoration of things old and decayed. He is the living Word of God, partaker, from all eternity, of his divine perfections,

inseparably united with his essence, and the radiant image of his person !

This life therefore, and the resurrection, and the power over sin, and the touch which shoots forth health and bounding vigour through things diseased, is not given to Him from without. In his divine nature He hath them all within himself ! Nay, the length and depth and breadth and height of them no flight is high enough to reach, nor plumb-line deep enough to fathom ! That this was, *in her measure*, the belief of the poor sick woman, is evident. It might have been confined to his power of bodily healing. It did not and could not grasp anything like the great idea of Christ's fulness. But it was of this nature. She believed Him so holy, and so great a wonder-worker in consequence, that every part of Him, nay the outermost fringe of the garments that hung on Him, was brimfull of power ! And that cures streamed out of Him as beams stream on all sides from the sun.

But it was not the *distant* thought of Christ on which she rested her hope, but on *touching* Him. The cure was to issue from his body.

So, in a sense, it is with Christ and this sick and diseased world ! He is not the mighty restorer, simply as the second person in the adorable Godhead ! He hath been so from all eternity, and in the eternity that is to come, He would have continued to be so ! And yet had that been all, the world's darkness might never have been illuminated by his light, and the plagues and sorrows of the valley of tears never have been dispossessed by the joys and healings which are laid up without measure in Him ! His power to cure, to us, cometh from *his body* ! That is, it comes from his *incarnation* ! It is derived from his having taken upon Him our flesh with all its ailments and infirmities, and having indissolubly united into one marvellous and adorable person, the Godhead and the manhood ! He is Immanuel—God with

us—God and man, and yet one Christ. Except in this his human nature, united with the divine, but presenting, so to say, to us, its *human side*, we cannot draw nigh to Him, and be healed of our infirmities.

And again,—it is a *spiritual lesson* which we draw from this and our Lord's other miraculous cures on earth,—gifts to the sick and suffering flesh and blood of universal humanity,—which, so to say, dropped round about Him wherever He walked among men ! The great point is *the healing of the soul* by Christ's fulness which they suggest ! And this, in scripture, in a great variety of forms, is indissolubly connected with it ; ever circulating about the Redeemer's person and glorious offices ! It is true therefore, that, with us, we begin from a direction of thoughts *opposite* to that which struck the hearers and spectators of our blessed Lord's ministry. *They* were gradually led from the healings of the flesh to the redemption of the soul ! *We* are

first taught, as Christ's great glory and mediatorial attribute, the cleansing of the soul's plague and leprosy ! And then, looking *through* that, if I may so say, we gaze on the inward meaning of the visible miracle.

But yet the healing of the body is not to be forgotten ! It shares the plague of the soul, and by its many aches and agonies, its decay and corruption, is at once a perpetual scourge and memorial of the soul's sin, which has involved in its ruin its earthly companion, the dust in which the God-born spirit resides. We long therefore, as the apostle says, to be *clothed* upon. We sigh not only for the salvation of the soul, but the redemption of the body, with its promised incorruption and joint inheritance of glory. And this healing or restoration of the present fleshly and perishable tabernacle, issueth forth directly from the *body* of Christ ! For He hath taken upon himself *all* our nature, and human soul and human body are alike

transfigured and redeemed by Him. Within his human form, shining and glorified unutterably, so that the angels are dim and dark by the side of it, the full deity dwells as in its temple. It is not only the type and pledge of our own immortality, but forth from it may well be said and thought to flow, those outstreaming glories and quickening creative virtues by which, at the last day, the saints, in a moment, will be like Him, because they shall see Him as He is.

And this, in one sense, may be said to have begun in us already! Not that our bodies are exempt from divers grievous infirmities, and indwelling plagues and maladies! Why should they? The Lord himself carried about with Him upon earth the same sore burden of sickness and infirmity. But by the Holy Spirit tabernacling within, it becomes purified and sanctified to holy uses! We no longer yield up our members to work sin, but as servants and instruments of God

unto righteousness. With all its miseries and sorrows therefore, it becomes a house in some sort swept and adorned for the residence of a purified spirit, nay, for Christ himself, who is our mighty and kingly Indweller! Our body is sanctified by his! And so we pray, in the holy communion, "that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood." And again, "Here we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee."

But where is He? How can we reach Him? How can we touch Him? We cannot put forth our hand and so lay hold upon Him where He sitteth in the heaven of heavens! Nay, but, dear brethren, though *there* it is that his bodily presence abideth, yet in deed and in truth, through the might of the Godhead, He is everywhere found! He is ever in his church, God and man, walking up and down in the midst of

us, the Redeemer, the Healer, the blessed Wonder-worker and Deliverer both of soul and body. And though, as it may appear, we do not discern the very form and lineaments of the face of the Son of man, yet, of a certainty, we do see the skirt of his garments, of which the woman thought to herself, that if she might but touch it, she would straightway be made whole. For instance, the outward visible forms of baptism and the holy communion, the water and the bread and wine, the visible or audible words of scripture, and so on, are the *fringes* of Christ's garments! They are not indeed the Lord himself, but they are the *hem* of his vestment. Nay, sometimes they are the very vestment itself under which, if we could but reach Him, the Lord and giver of life is to be found! He folds these outward things all round about Him! And far within them, animating and sanctifying them, if so He pleases,—in his own gushing and overflowing fulness the Saviour dwelleth and resideth!

But if so, and if the Lord of mercies and of all healing be thus among us, in the midst of these our fainting souls, and miserable bodies, how comes it that we discern not the marks of his working, but are sick and perishing still ? It is for the very same reason, that, out of the eager and countless multitude, there was only one poor woman healed and blessed. And yet they crowded about Him, and hemmed Him in on all sides, and looked on his face, at least the outward earthly visage, and not only touched with their fingers' tip the hem of his garments, but pressed close to their sweeping folds ! They with eager arms held him strait in. And yet those robes of his were not to them robes of healing. They were as the common garments worn by common men ! No power lay in them ! No virtue shot forth out of them ! Albeit in contact with Christ, and touching the fountain of life, sinful soul and sinful flesh remained as they were before. They were as they

would have been had the whole breadth of the earth separated them from Christ. Where lay the difference? solely in this, that in the sick woman there was *faith*; in them there was none! She felt her sore affliction, she acknowledged the Deliverer. She put forth her hand, and she was made whole! “Daughter! thy faith hath saved thee.” It was not, however, the mere belief in the healing virtue of all that had touched and so imbibed miraculous power from the Son of God. For that, so far as it went, was not the strength but the weakness of her faith! But it was the firm trust that to a *humble true-hearted daughter of Israel*, who trembled, in the feeling of her unworthiness, to approach his face, the merest thread that had touched the sacred flesh would convey the healing from the Blessed and Mighty One! There was in this the nature and force of a true faith, and it saved her! And so it is now! It avails not that men come and press near to Christ, and flock

out to Him, so to say, when they hear of his wonderful works; being curious and anxious to learn about Him, if there be one to talk of Him well and pleasingly to the ear, like one that playeth well upon an instrument of music. It avails not that we approach and perhaps rudely and familiarly touch his outward vestments, his word, and his sacraments! It avails not that we gaze, as it were, upon the Saviour's outward form and lineaments, such as we fashion them to our fancy, and such, even touching his nature and offices, as a mind and heart unrenewed may picture to themselves! The healing presence of the Saviour, his graciousness, his almighty power, his soul-changing and creative power may be as wide away from us as our earthly habitation is from the heaven of heavens, where his bodily presence shines and is enthroned.

No, nor will the healing power issue from his ordinances, tokens though they be of the shining presence within, if we

place their efficacy merely in the visible thing, and not in the vivifying and gracious Saviour who warms them with his beams, and sends the healing power through them into the believing soul. It is not the instrument in itself, but the instrument in the hands of the Divine Being who wields it, and maketh it efficacious and mighty to the revelation of Himself to the Soul ! In one word, there must be a *living faith* ! And that there should be implanted within us that blessed condition of life eternal, there must be a searching sense of our diseased condition, and the plague that hath desperately tainted both soul and body ! There must be a profound and heartfelt conviction that in heaven and earth there is no other healer of spirits, no other name given whereby the souls of men can be saved. Like the poor woman, who had spent all her living upon physicians, and yet was not cured, but rather grew worse, so may the sick soul, conscious of wants and in-

firmities, and asking for something to satisfy its craving, go to many a healer, and yet be none the better! The world cannot heal it, nor its pleasures nor gains. The wisdom of men, and a knowledge of all visible things that are in heaven and earth, cannot fill the void, nor cure the body of this death. No righteousness of our own, no working out salvation in our own strength, and, on the other hand, no presumptuous, fruitless, hollow trust, can either of them avail. The head still remains sick, and the whole heart faint. The issue of blood, the inward plague, still remains unstaunched! Christ alone can cure; and a living, humbling, repenting, trembling, yet bold and unquestioning faith, can alone bring Him within our reach!

Then we do find that all things in his Church, the word, prayer, the sacraments, preaching, are full of Christ, and that a healing and sanctifying power goeth forth out of them into our souls! Nay, we do

not only touch the skirts of the Saviour, but, more and more, as faith waxeth stronger and clearer, we firmly grasp and lay hold upon Him, and will not let Him go from us, no, not for a moment. And so from being a Saviour *without* us, he becometh at last a Saviour *within* us as well. Our heart and soul are changed from glory to glory, into the likeness of Him who died that we may live, and who dwelleth in sanctifying fulness within our souls !

If, therefore, it be asked, how it may be known whether Christ is *to us* a mere outside thing, a garment or a form of flesh and blood,—or the power of God unto salvation, as he was the power of healing to the afflicted daughter of Israel, the answer is easy. She knew that her faith had prevailed, because she *felt* within herself that her plague was healed, and the fountain of her blood was dried up. She knew it, that is, by the fruits ! She knew that Christ had put forth his power, by

the change upon her diseased body! So may we, in regard to the soul! Christ is a mighty, living, real person; not a sound, or an empty name! When a strong man exerts his strength, you see it—the stone is moved, or the tree is shaken, or the enemy is thrown to the ground! The effect is the measure of the power exerted. So, if Christ hath indeed been a healer to us, we shall discern the change! Not that the result is the measure of Christ's infinite power, but of our faith! But where the faith is, there follows the result. There is visible the effect. We know that Christ has been at work! The inward plague has been stayed. When Christ washes, the soul is cleansed. When Christ calls to the dead soul, it comes forth. It may for a time be still wrapt and swathed in the grave-clothes, the marks of its late condition, but it moves, and has a visible life within it. "Behold, the hour is coming and now is, when they

who are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth!" "Woman! be of good cheer, thy faith hath saved thee!" "Man! thy sins be forgiven thee."

Utterly cleansed from the plague which is born with us, and a part of us, we cannot be, so long as the flesh is on us. Iniquity in one form or other, attaches to our holiest things. We are only perfectly righteous, in the righteousness that is *without*, even the righteousness of Christ. But, in their measure, and issuing from the fulness of Christ, the saints have their own *inward righteousness*, not of power to justify, but the sign and fruit of their justification. It is the evidence that they have touched *in faith* the Healer of souls! and that their inward death is exchanged for life.

Great is the change which hath passed over us, if we from being sick have been made whole, and from being dead

are made alive again. And mighty is the power of faith, if it but touch Christ's outermost skirts.

What then will be the effect upon the growth and perfection of the soul when the veil is utterly removed in which the face of Christ is now hidden, and all the hindrances vanished which now resist the free passage into *us* of his adorable perfections, infinite life, and spotless holiness? Then not only shall the garments in which we shall be clad be made white by the blood of the Lamb, but the innermost spirit be full of light. Henceforth there shall be *no spot* upon its brightness. The glory of Christ shall have passed into it. Pray, therefore, that He may increase our faith and forgive our unbelief; that He will ever keep us by his side, and hold us by the hand, and prevent us from straying unto other masters, lying physicians of souls; that though we seem dead to the world, we may live to Him. "Set your affections upon things above, and not

on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory!"

SERMON XIII.

ST. JOHN xi. 33—35.—“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him ? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. JESUS WEPT.”

THERE is something not only affecting but wonderfully mysterious in this ! And though the whole of the solemn and heart-touching narrative of which this *weeping* of Jesus forms a part, is familiar to us from our infancy, yet the more we read it, and think of it, and try to throw ourselves into the depths of it, the more the marvel grows,—the less we comprehend it.

First, it is strange that Jesus should *weep* at all! For though He was clothed in human flesh, and with the countenance of man, He was “very God of very God,” co-eternal with the infinite Father, filling heaven and earth with his presence. Nay, at that very moment, though his feet trod the ground, and men pressed and touched the bodily tabernacle in which the Godhead dwelt, his uncircumscribed spirit was in heaven! Light with light, glory with glory, He was in unspeakable communion with the Father! Yet this great and awful One is melted with sorrow, troubled in his mind and soul. The immutable is shaken with human affections, as you see the tree moved by the wind! Tears come from the eyes that watch over things in heaven and things in earth.

Now it is easy and obvious, in comparison, to imagine the infinite and eternal God, dwelling *visibly*, and, as far as the eye could judge, circumscribed for a while, in a man’s

shape, and thus, for some inscrutable purpose, communing face to face with the creatures which his hand had made. Just, as in a lower way, a glorious angel might, for a time, as we sometimes read in the Old Testament, veil himself in a human body; not conjoined or mingled with it, or making it a *part* of himself, but only robing himself with it, as with a garment, to be put on and off at pleasure. Such thoughts, even out of Scripture, have been found among men. Nay, if God in such a form, for a time moved up and down this world of sin, and manifold miseries, it could not but be that compassion and mercy, and the essential goodness which is inseparable from the Holy One, should burst forth from the disguise of the descended Deity! They would shine like rays all round about! But still, as one should imagine, though God appeared in the flesh, there would be *no actual* movement of human passion in Him. Rather an unspeakable and awful calm-

ness, almost like the stillness of the great deep which no disturbance can reach, in the midst of all his love and compassion for his creatures !

But, *secondly*, over and above this mystery of the Godhead moved by human feelings at all, there strikes us, if I am not deceived, *another*, at the first view of the Lord at the grave of Lazarus ! Whilst no *laughter* ever moved the majestic solemnity of the Man of sorrows—whilst we never read that so much as a smile lightened the countenance which the burthen of human sins had marred and furrowed, it is not *often* that we read of his tears ! On one occasion, so far was he from joining in the clamorous sorrow of those about him, that he rebuked it, though it was over the dead body of a dear child, and therefore a fit occasion for lamentation. “Why make ye this ado,” he observed, to the friends of Jairus’s daughter, “and weep?” as though he intended to say, “Such weeping and wail-

ing for the dead becomes not those who believe in the power and goodness of God, and the resurrection that is to come."

And when he looked down from Mount Olivet upon Jerusalem, and did really weep over it, it was not strange that his eyes should become fountains of tears ! It might move a heart of stone to think upon the ruin that was coming upon its hard-hearted and infidel people, and that the glory of Mount Zion, temple, and pinnacle, and tower, would be trampled under foot by the heathen ! There was manifest cause for weeping !

But here he was come as a messenger of joy and gladness ! He came with *healing* on his wings ! He came to make the heart of the mourner leap for gladness ! And if it were a sorrowful thing even for the just, like Lazarus, to be laid in the grave, yet He was about to stretch out his hand, and send forth his powerful voice ! He had power and will to compel the grave to give up the dead. Why then

weep? It may, however, be said, that, though all this was in his heart and He knew what He would do, yet his human tenderness and sympathy for those whose nature He wore forbade Him even *to look* unmoved upon the tears and anguish of those around Him; albeit He was about to restore to them the light of their eyes. He was made of flesh and blood, and so He wept when He beheld weeping! And certainly the words of the evangelist seem to have this meaning. He says, "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping that came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled."

But still this hardly explains *the whole*. For all this He was prepared long ago. Even from Galilee He had *watched* the sickness and death of Lazarus. Over and above which, He had refused to come in time to save him, in order to put forth his power as God, and show before men's eyes that He was, in all senses, the resur-

rection and the life ! There seems here a *peculiar* anguish. It is more than the case, if this were all, deserved ! It was not a transient and involuntary sympathy ; tears shed one knows not why or wherefore, save that they cannot be helped. *He groaned* ; a cry escaped him, denoting the inward sorrow. Again, “ He was troubled in spirit,” the very depths of his nature, the *innermost* man, were agitated by those thoughts, whatever they were, that came over Him ! And again, “ He wept.” And yet once more, as he drew nigh to the grave, out of which he was about to raise his friend, He *groaned within himself* ! You see what I mean. There is surely more in these proofs of a bitter grief than the mere circumstances of Lazarus will explain. What was the cause of it ?

Now, in regard to the fact of God being moved *like man* at all, putting out of the question other dark and awful thoughts that are spread like so many clouds about

it, it is, *practically speaking*, the very glory, and to us men the special comfort of the Gospel of Christ. “Great is the mystery of godliness. God *manifest in the flesh.*” He hath not only borne our sorrows, and taken on his holy head the burning burthen of wrath, but He has been, and is, as one of us! No idle form of words, no phantom, which the hands cannot handle, and which cheats the eyes, is the Saviour of men! He was and is a real man of flesh and blood, made of a mother’s substance, which had drawn milk from a mother’s bosom! And the sinless holiness of his heart and soul were mixed and kneaded up with sorrows and tears and natural infirmities. It is a glorious thing to be able to say, “Christ has died,” but it as *precious* a truth to know, “Christ hath wept.” For had He not wept, He would not have died, and it was fit that the compassionate heart which was at last poured forth in blood, should first of all gush forth in tears!

We might have been told over and over again of God's goodness, and God's compassion, and God's pardon to repentant sinners; but, great and glorious and true beyond question, as is such a proclamation, it is nothing like being told, "God hath become man, very man, and hath wept with us, and for us." And surely, there are at least, two specific wants of the heart, which this meets and satisfies. It is very natural, for instance, nor can it be called unreasonable, for a sinner to say; "I acknowledge that I am not only full of infirmities, but of *transgressions*. I deserve God's *wrath*. I cannot deny it! I feel too within me, a longing to avoid the burning indignation which is set over against me! It would be peace to the troubled spirit and fretted conscience, to be at one with God, and to rest under the everlasting wings! But, I hardly know how, I cannot set about it. I cannot come to Him. It is in vain you *tell* me that God, the eternal, the infinite, He who was and

is, and is to be, is not only holy, but merciful ! His greatness, his awfulness, his dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, are a burthen to me. They crush and overwhelm me. They have an intolerable majesty, too great for flesh and blood ! Would that, as I cannot rise higher towards Him, he could stoop lower *to me* ! That so I might draw nigh to Him with eyes undazzled, and with a heart, not dissolved within me by a horror of fear and awe." O man, thy wish is answered ! here is what thine heart desireth. Here is not the dark and inscrutable, but the tender and merciful God ! He hath lost none of his mighty and adorable attributes, and yet your eyes may look at him, and your mouth may speak to him, and he hath a human heart, and will answer you ! Well, but how may I know that ? I see and acknowledge in Jesus of Nazareth, far more than man, a God in the flesh ! Yet how do I know that he REALLY is as we are, sin only excepted, a human form,

and a human soul? Here is the proof,—*Jesus weeps*,—further evidence you can have none.

And again,—there is another feeling, very common, and very natural in sorrow for departed friends and dear relations, which these tears of the Saviour satisfy, and turn into a real comfort, and an experienced, *practical joy*! You speak to a mourner of the *faithlessness* of over-grief, of sorrowing over the departed, like men that have no hope. You do not find fault with the sorrow, but *the excess of it*, which will not be comforted, and dishonours Him who is the resurrection and the life! You speak in vain. Evidently the feeling at bottom is, “It is all very well for you to talk of God’s will, and God’s goodness and mercy, and so on, and the duty to look up to Him, and rest upon Him in our anguish. We cannot deny that such is the spirit and meaning of his word! But after all, what does God know of the infirmities and anguish of the human heart, at the loss of

them who were as a part of ourselves? In the depths and heights of his glory, and blissful Godhead, how can He feel for us? This is no comfort for us, let us weep!" The answer to it is this,—"He does *know it all*. From the highest to the lowest, he hath felt all *human* grief. He hath embraced the full compass of the human heart, and hath gone down, in his own flesh, into its very darkest depths! He has hungered and thirsted, and *pined and wept!*"

When He bids you to look up and be comforted, therefore, it is not because He does not know what human anguish is. But, on the contrary, it is because He *does* know it.

Of course there are many other wants in human nature, and in our relation to Almighty God, which the perfect *incarnation*, the *very and literal* manhood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that alone, supplies; some of which we see, and some of which we see not. But, *any how*,

the *two* which I have just mentioned, and which are very real and practical and every-day cravings, are of the number; and deep should be our thankfulness, to our heavenly Father, that so it is. And, in reverently approaching the other difficulty, and endeavouring, not to fathom the infinite depths of Christ's nature, but only to understand some of its human feelings, ONE remark is sufficiently obvious. Many of us have sorrowed over the death, and stood at the grave of those who have been near and dear to us ! Those, certainly, who have any depth of thought and enlargement of Christian feeling about them, will agree that their grief, and the reflections which that grief stirs in the innermost mind, on the frightful wreck and ruin which death works, go beyond the *individual* case ! Of course, it is the *departure* of one of our own household, which enables us, perhaps for the first time, to realize and embody death,— to give him a form and shape, and see

what the king of terrors is! Perhaps without it, our hearts would never have grieved for *this*! But be that as it may, sorrow for *all flesh* which must in like manner come into the dust, mingles with and deepens our own.

Nor can we fail to think at least somewhat, of the awful nature and tendencies of sin; which thus goes hand in hand with sorrow, and hath made desolate, not only one solitary household, but all the hearths, however blest by love and goodness, which have been from the beginning until now! The world's sorrow! the world's sin! one vast society of woe,—the tears and death, and the darkness and the worm, which, sooner or later, must be the portion of all the sons of Adam, no matter how gay they may seem, or what laughter of fools may fill their heart! I do not say *how far* our private sorrows have this admixture. But that they have it, and that a larger, deeper, *world-wide* gloom is spread over the heart in consequence, I do not doubt. Surely

here we can see *one* cause at least, and not an inadequate one, of the Saviour's trouble and anguish of soul. So that in the midst of this triumphant display of power,—that shooting forth of a visible glory, that promise and realization of life in the midst of death,—there is *no joy*, no elation of spirit, such as in a mere man one might expect! There is only a deeper sorrow, and a deadlier cloud upon his soul!

Imagine such a *turn of thought and feeling*, as I just mentioned, only deepened and enlarged on every side, such as it would be in the Son of God. Imagine too a soul like his,—not shallow as ours, but like the *sea*, a receptacle for such thoughts as might embrace *all* mankind, all the capacity and sweep, to its uttermost verge, of sin, and death, and hell! And, then we see that the heart of the Saviour, upon the edge of the grave of Lazarus, must have had a foretaste of the bitter cup of Gethsemane. There was not enough, in the raising of *one*, to counter-

balance this. For, as to the sisters themselves, the recovery of their brother from the grave would be but a short-lived happiness. To the grave he must soon again descend; and, although recovered life, and a period of trial renewed, might have been a precious gift to the soul of one who had died not at peace with God, it could be no real boon to one of the saints! To recal the spirit of the just out of Abraham's bosom, and a blissful rest from its earthly labours in Paradise, to the trials and certain griefs of this world, was, in itself, *not* a reward, not a gift of love, but the contrary. Had there not been other and deeper reasons for making a dead man again move to and fro, in the land of the living, though unable, probably, to tell the secrets of the abode of spirits, Lazarus would not have lived again, till the resurrection of the last day! Never, till the last trumpet sounded, and the throne was set, would the lips of the Saviour and Judge have uttered the words, "*Lazarus, come forth.*"

Nor could the rising from the grave of a single saint fill, at such a moment, the soul of the Redeemer with the comforting and glorious thought, that thus *all the realm of death* should one day be utterly spoiled; and every soul that tenanted a body of flesh, be redeemed to an immortal glory, and a triumph over decay and the worm! He knew, on the contrary, that to the multitudes of those for whom He died, the resurrection from the dead would not be a day of triumph, a new and heavenly birthday, but the real commencement of the second and eternal death, the living destruction both of body and soul! He *knew*, that though each drop of his precious blood was a ransom for a world, yet few and far between were the souls that, by a living faith, would be washed in it! He *knew*, that though he was the resurrection and the life, yet that, not only to the evil and infidel generation among whom he tabernacled, but to generation upon genera-

tion till the world's end, He would still be the despised and rejected ! He knew that the everlasting gospel would be a savour, not of life, but of death ! His soul at once embraced the past, the present, and the future of this world of sin. His eye, looking far beyond the visible sphere, commanded, at one view, not only the glory above and the hallelujahs round the throne, but the kingdoms of woe and outer darkness.

In one word, it was not Mary and Martha that he saw, but all the weeping eyes and broken hearts from the beginning to the end of time. It was not the sin of a few unbelieving Jews, but of infinite souls, a fallen, perishing race. It was not one grave that he beheld, one solitary cave of death, but that all-swallowing gulf of darkness wherein hell hath enlarged her borders, and from whence heavenly love, and a ransom above price, have not power to snatch the godless and unbelieving ! Sin, death, the grave, a

condemned world, the judgment and the Judge ! Is it not enough for tears ? So it was, that Jesus groaned—that he was troubled in spirit—that He groaned again—that He wept ! So it was, that He ever walked upon earth *in sorrow*—not because he was poor, or despised, for these are evils which it requires not a heavenly nature or strength to suffer patiently, but because he carried in his heart the *burthen of the sins of men* ! Sad and mourning did he go to and fro upon the earth, whilst those he made rejected Him, and his own received Him not. And so it was, that there were never, nor ever will be, sorrows like the sorrows of Him who died that we may live.

One more remark and I will conclude ! When Jesus wept, we are told that the Jews exclaimed, “*Behold how he loved Him !*” And some of them said, “Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died ?” It was not an

unnatural remark. It could not but seem a mystery that He who could rescue his friend from death had not prevented him from dying. The only answer that could be given was this,—“ Whatever reason Christ might have for not doing so, it cannot have come either from lack of wisdom or lack of power! No, nor from lack of love; for you see how he weeps over him! His hand is even now stretched out to rescue him from the grave, though he hath been there four days already! Seek no farther then! His reasons and his counsels are in the depths of his own bosom, beyond yours or any man’s fathoming!”

And so we answer still, if it should occur to any one to think or ask in a similar strain! “ Could not He who is full of love and compassion, and hath come down from heaven that He might redeem men from sin and death, have prevented that either one or the other should deform the fair creation of God! And at all

events, could not He who dwelleth in the souls of his saints here, and will descend from heaven hereafter to put palms in their hands, and everlasting crowns upon their heads, have transferred them at once to their home and their glory ? He loves them and pities them ! Granted ; but why doth He not protect them He loves from harm and wrong, and wipe all tears from their eyes at once ? ” To say the truth, we cannot read the riddle. It is well to confess it. We cannot expound the mystery ! We cannot disperse, either by our strength and knowledge, or by the illumination of the inspired Word, the veil that covers all things, when we inquire into God’s whys and wherefores ! Verily, there are clouds round about Him ! and a thick darkness is over the counsels of the Eternal ! His way is in the sea, and his path in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known ! But He is wise and just and good ; and who art thou, O man, who

questionist God, or repliest to thy Maker ?
It is his will ; be content ; it is enough.

But whatever may be the reasons which, in God's eternal counsels, have made this world the abode of trial, and many sorrows, of a surety, it is no lack of love for us, whom he hath called in Christ Jesus our Lord; no, nor for any soul that He hath made ! God's love,—that love in Christ, entire and full-orbed, and radiant with glory,—hath been revealed unto us. In our hearts, *we*, at least, who are not of the world, have already a foretaste of the joy that is to come ! We are well content to wait his good pleasure, and to pass through the gates of death to the resurrection and the life eternal. All the *reasons* why almighty God hath permitted sin and death to enter into his creation, we cannot give, but a *practical* reply we may furnish to the repinings of human infirmity, the heart-sinking of sorrow, and the questionings of unbelief !

Perhaps thou art a mourner and a sorower. Well, but what wouldst thou have? Christ the Son of God went mourning all the days of his life upon earth! Thou hast pain to endure, and contempt, and poverty! Well, but Jesus too, the Lamb without spot or sin, sustained all the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and watered the ground of Calvary with his precious blood!

But thou repinest that the flesh must be torn from the spirit, and thou must pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and thy body must be laid in the grave! Well, but again, what wouldst thou have? Wouldest thou fare better than thy Lord? Christ hath passed through the same valley, and the spotless flesh he wore, though it could not see corruption, yet went down before thee into the chambers of death.

But thou art afraid of what will come after, and the terrors of the world to come are heavy on thee. Well, but Christ hath

conquered them all for thee, and God is reconciled, and heaven is opened, and death is disarmed, and the grave is emptied, and Satan trampled under foot, if you will come to Him, and partake of his life. The Jews said, “How He *loved Him!*” when he did but weep for Lazarus. But He *hath died for us.* And weeps in heaven, that we, through unbelief, make the death he suffered of no avail! Be of good cheer, then. We care for nothing, so long as He is ours! We doubt nothing, neither is our heart troubled, though the earth be moved, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea. Martha! thy brother shall rise again! “I *know* that he shall rise again at the resurrection of the last day.” “I am the resurrection and the life,” saith the Lord. “Whosoever believeth in me shall live, though he die. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” he said to Martha upon earth. “Yea, Lord, I believe that

thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world!" Believe ye this? he says to us out of heaven. Yea, Lord! we believe! help thou our unbelief!

SERMON XIV.

LUKE vii. 14, 15.—“He came and touched the bier, and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man ! I say unto thee, arise ! And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother !”

THERE were only three occasions during our Lord’s ministry on which the power of giving life to the body went visibly forth from Him, and the dead rose from the grave at his command ! And yet, when we consider who and what He was, the infinite love which was laid up in his heart, and gushed out wherever he moved, over man and this sorrowful world, and the almighty which accompanied it, it

seems sometimes surprising that the number of those raised from the dead is not much greater !

As these blessed lips never opened without dropping from them the heavenly manna, even the word of God ; and as He preached wherever He went ; so, wherever the sinful earth was touched by the feet of the Son of God, one would almost have looked to see the graves open around, and the breath of life again animating the dust of death ! But it is not so, but far otherwise. And there must, of course, be reasons, just and good, why He was thus sparing of these stupendous proofs of his divinity ! Visibly He walked to and fro upon the earth, with many signs and wonders round about Him, but still without *compelling* the reluctant and unbelieving heart to behold the Godhead in the flesh ! It was his good will and pleasure then, as *now*, that the assurance of faith should only be given to the humble, childlike spirit. To the pure and meek He was

and is visible; to the proud a cloud is round Him! He is invisible! And therefore natural to the human heart as is that hankering after *outward, visible* signs, such as the eye can see and the hands handle, He always sternly and emphatically repressed it in the Jews! “Give us,” they said, “a sign from heaven! such as shall clearly surpass the power of men—a star—a blazing cloud—and we will believe! Let Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the cross, and we *will believe.*” But He was deaf to their infidel challenge, and gave, as the crowning sign upon earth, that which his own eternal counsel had proclaimed, even the sign of Jonas the prophet.

Again, He did not come upon earth in order to reverse at once those laws of pain and sorrow which God has imposed upon a sinful world! He himself was among men, not *exempt* from the manifold sorrows which are the lot of flesh and blood, but bearing the *burthen* of them all,

acquainted with our griefs, and watering his path with tears ! As He himself was therefore, so, on the whole, did He allow those among whom He lived to remain ; neither banishing sickness, nor healing weariness, nor undoing the curse of death !

And when we further reflect that his kingdom was in no wise of this world, and that He allures disciples by no promises of present ease, or peace, or glory, but, just the contrary, that He holds forth to them present pain and suffering ; it would have been utterly inconsistent with his design to tempt men by hopes of the constant exertion, for themselves or others, of his power to raise the dead !

And yet this VISIBLE exercise of AUTHORITY over men and angels, over life and death, was *necessary* ! No doubt ! It was the *proof* of his commission from Almighty God. It awakened men's attention and testified that a mighty prophet was arisen among them ! It was a constant proclamation to the sons of men ! "Behold, O

Zion ! thy King cometh ! Behold thy God, O Jerusalem ! The lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dead are raised !” And so men flocked around, and made ready to hear that which was the cause of his coming, and the mighty power of God,—even the word of life ! There was a certain divine ECONOMY, therefore, in the wonders that He wrought, enough for his great purpose and no more ! *This* explanation, surely, is quite sufficient to remove any difficulty which might occur from the rarity of this exhibition of his power over death and the grave ; as it is, there is more than enough for the faith of the saint, and the condemnation of the infidel.

Nor, again, is it for us to inquire why, among all the desolate widows of Israel, He selected the poor woman of Nain ! Nor why, among the many fathers and mothers who wept over the bereavement of sons and daughters, called away in the *first bud* as flowers, his mercy fell upon Jairus and his wife. Nor even why He

restored Lazarus alone of all dying brothers to the arms and love of sorrowing sisters! He dispenseth his graces as He listeth, and it is not for the creatures of his hand to say, Lord! why dost thou this? or, Lord, why dost thou not do that?

And one thing is very evident, that though, doubtless, there was in all three cases a most merciful and pitiful regard to the sorrows of the individual persons whom his miracles relieved, yet they were wrought more for the sake of those who came after, than of those who enjoyed the immediate benefit! The sick, whom his hands and his word healed by thousands, obtained by that no exemption, for the future, from the aches and anguish of disease! They who left their beds and walked, were again, as death approached, sadly brought down to the same state from which they had once been rescued. The souls which were reunited to their bodies, and the bodies which were rescued for a while from the grave and from the

worm, had, nevertheless, to undergo again the doom of all the sons of men. "Out of the dust wast thou taken and unto dust shalt thou return!" But though the sick again sickened, and the risen again died, and the blessings conferred by the Giver of life and health were but for a moment, yet to us the instruction is enduring and the benefit unchangeable. For us, and for our comfort and instruction, they were healed; for us, they were raised, on whom the ends of the world are come! And one remark is very obvious in all these cases in which our Lord exercised this power of life-giving to the dead body. A special regard is exhibited in them all, to those domestic affections and sweet family ties, which are the greatest earthly happiness which God has bestowed upon man, and which, in his mercy, He hath bestowed upon all! Rank, and wealth, and power, are only *transient earthly things*, gifts most perilous to the souls of those who possess them. The affection of parents and

children, and brothers and sisters, may abide for ever when grace has sanctified them, and they are given by our heavenly Father quite as richly and blessedly to the cottage as the palace ! God is no respecter of persons ; Lazarus, to Him, is a higher and nobler being than the rich man with his purple and his feast. Accordingly, when He took the young maiden by the hand and said unto her, Arise,—it was in answer to the prayer of the sorrowing parents who were standing by the bedside of the dead child, and weeping that the joy of their eyes was taken away, and the light and glory of their household was darkened for ever ! His human heart was melted within Him, and his divine power restored the much-beloved and lost ! And so there is quite enough recorded in the history of the raising up of Lazarus to make us sure of the same thing. The brothers and sisters whom Jesus loved were not only united by *flesh and blood*, but their hearts were bound together by

holy bands, and by that family love which exalts and purifies what is else an accidental tie, and is easily supplanted by the friendships and connexions of our own free choice.

Hence came the instant message from the sisters to our Lord, while He was a long way off in Galilee; “Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick!” And the same vehemence of sisterly affection breathes in the exclamation which burst involuntarily from the lips of Martha the moment she beheld Jesus! “Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died!” As though she would fain convey a tender half-reproach upon his tarrying in Galilee, while one so dear to him and to them was yet in the land of the living, and capable of restoration to health and strength. As if she had said, “Lord, thou knewest how tenderly we loved each other, and that Lazarus was a part of our own souls! and we, sad and widowed in the world without him! Hadst thou been present I am sure thou wouldest have sorrowed with our sor-

rows, and wept with our weeping, and not endured the sight of our once happy home changed into a desolation. And so, thou wouldst have stretched out thine hand, and he would have lived and not died!" And so, the words of the Jews, when Mary went out, convey the same impression of the great love which was known to unite the sisters and their brother;—Behold! she goeth to the grave to weep there!

But even, had we not these recorded proofs, we might have been quite certain that the home where Jesus visited, and sat, and spake divine words, and rested his way-worn limbs and vexed spirit, was a home of peace and affection. The spirit of peace and love hung and hovered over it like a cloud of glory, and that humble cottage hearth was more blessed than the palaces of kings! And so in that miracle of mercy which is recorded in my text, the living interest of it lies in the same home feelings. That which is recorded as moving our Lord's heart with

compassion, is that bereavement and household solitude which passionate affection for those who are departed can alone inflict. Certainly it was no wonder that the sight wrought powerfully in that holy heart which is all love and mercy ! Simple as the expressions of the evangelist are, and short and artless as is the whole description, nobody can read it or hear it read, without being deeply affected by it. "And it came to pass," says the evangelist, "the day after, that He went into a city called Nain, and many of his disciples went with Him, and much people ! Now, when He came nigh unto the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a *widow*."

So that she was already, even before this last and crushing thunderstroke, suffering under that sore affliction which holy scripture, as well as the general consent of mankind, accounts the sharpest and most overwhelming ! She was a

widow! CONSECRATED therefore, so to say, by having had the heavy hand of God upon her. A sorrowing daughter of Israel, whom every true heart should grieve for and every hand be ready to aid! Accordingly Almighty God, over and over again, speaks of all such in their desolation, as protected by his special care! Many are the blessings on those who, being like unto God, visit and comfort the *widows* in their affliction, and terrible the vengeance on them who shall vex or oppress those whom the Lord hath already chastened. But she had still an earthly support and stay! She had *one* son, in whom was bound up, husband, brother, daughter, all in that one! And *now* the hand of God was again stretched out against her, and this his remaining earthly gift was recalled. She is doubly and utterly widowed; the light is turned into darkness to her, and the very sun shineth in heaven no more for her; the blackness of a hopeless sorrow is over

all. She is alone, the *only son of the widow is dead!*

Nor must it be forgotten that, unspeakably severe as is the loss of an only child to the widow, so long as the world shall last, to Jewish women it was, if possible, a still more cruel stroke!—bitterness on bitterness! They looked on children and the fruit of the womb as the blessed gift of God, and, before the Saviour came, it was the cherished hope of every Jewish mother that in her line might spring forth He who was to redeem Israel! Any how, to be childless was the *greatest of reproaches and desolations*. And to have one's family cut off till the tree which once bare goodly branches sprouted no more, but withered and died, was ever reckoned not as an accident common to all men, but as a wrathful visitation of *Almighty God!* They knew not then, under that dimmer and more earthly dispensation, as we know now, that blessed are they that mourn,

thrice blessed they who in faith and patience weep now, for they shall be comforted. Only to the special saints of God was it given to know of a surety, that whomsoever God loves He afflicteth with the rod, and chasteneth every son whom He receiveth! Sorrow sorely perplexed those men of old, affliction troubled them ; —an irreparable woe, an evil with no earthly consolation or visible help, brought their hearts down to the grave with despair! God was their *enemy* and *fought* against them! So spake his friends to Job when they saw Him afflicted, his flesh filled with sore disease, and his very heart stricken within Him : “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent ? or when were the righteous cut off, even as I have seen ?” says Eliphaz. “They that plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same.” They meant to say, “Thou art *sorely visited*, and therefore thou hast grievously sinned.” And so the holy psalmist, every now and then, seems

distracted by the same terrors of the wrath of God, in the guise of much affliction. “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in a place of darkness, and in the deep. Thine indignation lieth hard upon me, and thou hast vexed me with all thy storms. Dost thou show wonders among the dead, or shall the dead rise up again and praise thee? Shall thy loving kindness be showed in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction? Lord! why abhorrest thou my soul, and hidest thou thy face from me?”

And so might this poor widow have complained in the despair and anguish of her heart! “O Lord! thou hast written bitter things against me! Thou hast set all thy terrors in arms against thy poor servant, and the fear of thee hath utterly undone me! What have I done that thou afflictest me so sorely? and how have my sins so far surpassed the transgressions of my friends and neighbours, that all men should shake their heads, and point their finger at *my* sorrow? whilst others have

friends and husbands, why am I a widow ? whilst others see their children's children, why am I bereft of mine only son ? Thy terrors, O Lord, have gone over my head, like a flood, and I am overwhelmed in the gulf." It would not have been unnatural for her thus to have felt and reasoned ! We durst not rebuke her for the trouble and terror of her soul ! Yet, when we consider that our Lord, in working his miracles, ever required more or less of faith and love, and that his gifts of healing were granted to none of hard and unbelieving hearts, we cannot doubt, though it be not directly mentioned, that this afflicted daughter of Israel was not unfitted to receive so great a benefit ! She had not murmured against the Lord. She had said with Eli of old, in sorrow and bereavement, " It is the Lord ; let Him do as seemeth Him good !" Or with holy Job, " The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ! blessed be the name of the Lord !" " He is the Father of the

fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows, even God in his holy habitation!" The instinct of faith and trust in God is ever sure, though darkness be round about his seat; the heart hath ever whispered from within that He is loving and merciful! But still it is to us, on whom the light of the Gospel hath fully shone, a blessed thing to be assured that afflictions of soul and body *are* heavenly things, *tokens* sure and certain of the love of our heavenly Father towards us; nay, causes of joy and thankfulness, that we are thus fashioned in the likeness of the Lord, and are visited even as was He.

Yet it would have sounded a cruel mockery to the ear of the widow, in spite of her trust in God, had any one said, "O woman! mourn not, let not your tears flow, or your heart be broken! Thou art not the orphaned or stricken woman whom, in thine anguish, thou supposest thyself to be! Thou shalt enjoy the light of thine eyes once more. His breath

shall come again into Him, and he shall live!" She would have said, "Do not, in mercy, jest with a widow in her desolation, and a mother in her bereavement! I know that my son shall rise again at the resurrection of the last day! But never shall I see his face again on earth! It is enough! disturb me not, O man! It is the will of God!" And indeed, how could she know? She could not dream that when David asks, "Shall the dead rise up again, O Lord, and praise thee?" she would herself be enabled to answer, "Yes, they shall! behold my son whom God hath given me from the grave." "Shall thy loving kindness be shewed in the grave?" "Yes, it shall—it is—he is indeed loving and merciful. For behold, this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found."

And, indeed, this tarrying of help till hope is gone is every now and then a part of God's dealings with men, and men's souls. It is never too late for God

to help us, and, in trials and sorrows, He permits one hope after another to vanish, and one cloud of evils to be heaped upon another, till not a ray of light can be discerned save by faith! It is a HORROR of darkness, before He vouchsafes to allow the glory of his countenance to shine upon us. It is at *midnight*, so to say, that God's sun arises upon the sad and afflicted, with joy in its rays, and healing in its wings! It is with his spiritual Israel, as with Israel according to the flesh! They fled from Pharaoh, and the Egyptians with their chariots and horses pursued fiercely after them! The wilderness and the mountain shut in the trembling and despairing people! In their front lay the sea, utterly impassable, ready to swallow them up in its depths! Behind them they heard the rattling of Pharaoh's chariot-wheels, and the thunderings of his armies as they shouted to the battle. God hath forsaken them! man is upon them! there is no escape; one hour more,

and the master will recover his fugitives, and the fierce king have trampled under foot his revolted subjects! No! Man's extremity is God's opportunity! Moses stretched forth his rod over the sea, and the waters stood like a wall on the right hand, and on the left. Then were the weak saved, and the strong dashed in pieces. Then sunk Pharaoh, and his hosts, like lead in the mighty waters! "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." And so it was when Lazarus was sick. No Jesus came! One day passed after another, and yet the merciful Lord and Giver of life was still far away from the house of affliction. Lazarus pines, the sickness waxes more sore, the shadows of death gather over him, and he dies! Yet still no Jesus! He is laid in the grave, and the work of corruption has begun. Nay, the stone is laid on the mouth of the sepulchre, and no eye, not even the

dearest and most tender, dares any longer to look upon the countenance of the dead ! It must be veiled from the eyes of men ; the worm feasts on it ! Yea, he hath been in the grave four days already ! There is no hope ! none ! *Then Jesus comes.* And so it is here.

Little knowest thou, O afflicted, that the Holy One is near, and that joy and gladness shall again visit thee, even upon earth ! The earth shall again be green to thee, and the heaven bright ! Look up ! He is come, and stops the bier ! A lowly man in lowly garments, but still the Lord of life ! And if you look, though the face is marred with sorrows, yet it weareth a strange love and majesty upon it, such as no other human countenance ever wore, and the voice which cometh from the divine lips hath power to move the innermost soul ! The ears of man never heard the like of it. It speaketh to thee, and the sounds come like a blessed and heavenly music into thy soul ! Be

of good cheer! The Lord visiteth the meek, and bindeth up the broken-hearted! "And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not! And He came and touched the bier, and they that bare him stood still." They were struck, no doubt, by his commanding look, hardly knowing what was about to come to pass, yet a vague expectation of something, they knew not what, filling their hearts, as his hand touched the bed of death! The multitude, too, stop, at the same moment! They crowd round to see what has caused the bearers to pause! The mourners look up, and all eyes are fixed upon Christ! Their hearts are on their lips, ready to question wherefore he stops the bier, and interrupts their passage to the house of death. But before the question, Who art thou? can be put, it is already answered. "And He said, *Young man, I say unto thee, arise!*" Strange that words so few and simple, and tones so gentle, should

have such a marvellous efficacy, and work, in an instant, what all the might of men and angels could not accomplish! To whom or what did the Lord speak? to the dead body? but that was dull and senseless dust. To the departed spirit? but it is far and far away! Who can tell where the soul of the young man was abiding, in what distant sphere? where is the world in which the spirits of the departed rest till the resurrection day? We know not; but nothing less than the voice of God, and the power of the highest, could penetrate so far! Instantly it is heard. Instantly it is obeyed. The parted soul and body are again united. The young man lives. He sits up on the bier, and begins to speak. “And He *delivered him to his mother.*”

And here the account ends, save that the evangelist adds, “And there came a fear on all. And they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is risen up among us, and God *hath visited* his people.” And

now the whole is passed away from our eyes; and the gate of the city, and the long funeral procession, and the dead man carried out, and the weeping widow, and the Lord touching the bier,—all is gone! It is eighteen hundred years ago! the very dust of the city is no more! Yet, could we see into that invisible world, into which the souls of all the spectators of that day have long since been gathered, we should discover that great were the results, either for eternal bliss or eternal woe, of the marvellous sight which they then beheld! The multitude were amazed, they were fear-struck at seeing the dead man rise, and hearing the dead man speak! Did *they repent?* did they come to the *Life-giver*, and were their dead souls awakened? were the death-clothes which covered and swathed them torn away, even the sins and lusts which bind the unconverted spirit? did they stand up from their death-bier, and live to God, and praise Him, who thus raised them by the

changing spirit to this first resurrection? We know not! Holy Writ is silent. Perhaps, like the rest of their countrymen, they feared for a moment, and *marvelled*,—and then went away, as they came; till both fear and marvel died away from their hearts!

And the widow and her son, what did they?—of a surety they thanked, with all their heart and soul, their Redeemer and their God!—of a surety they were among the faithful in that hard-hearted and adulterous generation. And though mother was dear to son, and son to mother, yet each loved most Him who succoured them in the day of trouble, and rescued one from heart-breaking, and the other from death! Of a surety they both lived and fell asleep in Jesus! In the place of departed spirits, they dwell together, undivided in bliss. And when the saints shall put on their glory and reign, they shall reign with them, and tell to those glorified spirits who rejoice to hear of God's loving-

kindness, the miracle of power and mercy, which, while they were yet in the flesh, Christ wrought for them at the gates of Nain !

SERMON XV.

JOHN xx. 21, 22.—“Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

In making these words the subject of our meditation to-day, I shall pass lightly over their application to the apostles and first servants of the Lord, who, by this embreathing of the Spirit upon them, received those gifts by which they were enabled to bring the world to Christ ! We and the other christian churches are the monuments of the Spirit’s work ! And the peace which He gave the apostles, He gives to all that believe unto the world’s

end. This is of most importance to us, in its application to ourselves, and therefore I purpose to dwell upon it.

And so considered, I think the words are full of joy and comfort! Instructive they certainly are; for they represent strikingly both the end and privilege of the Gospel—peace with God; and the mode in which it is conferred upon sinners—even the power of the Spirit proceeding from Christ! And, first of all, there is a whole world of meaning in the *very word* itself with which our blessed Lord salutes his apostles, now rejoicing in the restoration of their Master to them, and his resurrection from the dead. *Peace* be unto you! Peace unto them who had lately been so sorely tried and grieved in heart by his death and passion, and by all the waves of God's wrath which had passed over *his* head, who, as they thought, should have redeemed Israel. And so *He had*; but in wondrous ways which men's carnal under-

standing had not dreamed of, and their earthly heart abhorred. And this promise of peace was the very assurance which He had given to the apostles, at his last supper, in that most divine discourse which you will find recorded in the Gospel of St. John! “*Peace I leave with you, He says; my peace I give unto you!* Not as the world giveth give I unto you.” And yet to a worldly eye, it was an ill season for such a promise! Sorrow and hatred and persecution all round; and the agony in the garden close at hand; and the betrayal, and the flight of his disciples, and the trial, and the bloody death! Peace was hardly a harvest likely to spring from such a sowing! And yet He that is the truth and the life says so. He even clearly connects it with that very sorrow and death which to human eyes seemed utterly irreconcilable with it! Marvellous were thy words! O Saviour of men! and marvellous the divine way by which they were made good, and *shall* be made good

for ever and ever to them that trust in thee !

But this was not new, though wonderful ; for so it had been declared from the beginning. When the prophet Isaiah proclaims the glorious titles of the Redeemer that was to be, he winds up with this as the greatest ! “ Unto us a child is born ! unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful ! Counsellor ! the mighty God ! the everlasting Father ! the *Prince of Peace !* ” And yet it is the very same evangelical prophet, who describes him as the despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He does it not dimly either, but as vividly and distinctly as if, with his own ears he had heard Pilate say, “ Behold the man ! ” and the Jews call out, “ Not this man, but Barabbas ! Away with Him, crucify Him ! ” Surely this is an agreement beyond man’s making—joy and such sorrows no human thought would have brought together !

And so he was accounted by the angels above, who came to announce Him to the shepherds! It is the very point on which they insist in that heavenly song, which they have left us, “Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth *peace!*” I feel sure that I shall not weary you, by bringing all these passages together. Nay I will not do you the wrong to suppose, that the words and the promises which have always made the heart of God’s saints leap for joy, can be other than interesting and sweet to *you!* Certainly, the apostle Paul thought and felt that, like the word *salvation*, peace was a sound musical to the Christian’s ear. “Grace be to you,” he says to the Thessalonians, “and *peace* from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ!” “To the saints that are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus, Grace be to you, and *peace.*” And thus to all the churches! And so the blessing, likewise taken from the same great servant of Christ, with which we are dismissed after the service

of the great congregation: “*The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts.*”

What I want you to feel, by thus pressing on you over and over again the words of the Spirit is this; that what they speak so much about, and what saints and apostles evidently account so precious, cannot be a mere sound or form of words, but is a very real and mighty thing. Nay you ought to feel and know it as well as they did, and talk of it as naturally and familiarly. And certainly, when men chose as a form of salutation to each other, in ancient times, the words “Peace be with you,” it seems to bear a sort of natural testimony to what runs throughout the word of God,—that *peace* was the great blessing for which the heart and soul of man, nay, all nature which has shared his lot, pines and longs! “*Peace be with you,*” indeed, even to this day, is the common salutation of people in the East. Is it not a confession of what I say, that at the bottom of all men’s

hearts, there is a want of it, and therefore, that the best wish we can make to our brethren, is that God may give it them; any how, that they may obtain it?

You must not wonder that I say so. For is not life a *trouble*, and is not the world a *confusion*? And, when you come to look into it, and take a part in it, is it not all like a sea, tossing to and fro with great commotion, and tormented by winds and tempests which stir the waters thereof, till, what with *them*, and their own inward restlessness, men are never at peace for a moment! It is not without a very deep meaning, and a thorough knowledge of heaven and earth, that the apostle in the revelation, describing the passing away of the present order of things, says: "And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there *was no more sea*." There was no more raging, and swelling, and turbulence, and restlessness, and sorrow, but

all peace, and quietness, and rest ! *There shall be no more sea !* As if not only man would rejoice in being at rest, but the very earth itself, *on* which and *in* which we live, would be glad at her deliverance from the waves and storms of the great deep which she holdeth in her bosom ! . . .

But I cannot help thinking that this may be brought much nearer home to us all, and that there is no one here, capable of reflection, or past the age of childhood, who cannot add his testimony to the truth of scripture in this matter ! You, for instance, who are occupied in your farms and shops, who rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness ! Have *you* found rest for your souls ? if your heart could be opened, and we could see to the bottom of it, should we find therein calmness and peace ? Are you not, on the contrary, eaten away by many, many cares—by anxieties, and doubts, and disappointments which are constantly fretting you, and distracting

your thoughts, and filling your heart, till there is no room therein for any thing else? Are you content, when you have succeeded better than usual? or is it not the contrary? does it not make you athirst and anxious for more, and still for more? And if your hopes are thwarted, and losses come from this side and that, is not the heart bitter about it, and is there not sadness and murmuring for the present, and gloom over the future? I am not speaking to blame you in any way! But is it not so? You cannot say, "*we are at peace, our hearts are content and at rest.*" And you who earn the wages of your daily toil, you who win your bread by the sweat of your brow, as God hath appointed, and who have no silver and gold to lay up, and have good reason to be content, if you have food to nourish you, and raiment to put on—what say you in this matter? what answer does your heart give? Whatever it may be, I am sure it is not "*I am at rest, I have peace!*"

And to all I would say, do you not often and often, mournfully feel, and confess to yourselves, that life is a poor and hollow thing ? that in trying to make yourselves happy in it, and happy *upon* it, you are attempting to sustain the soul on that which is not bread, but sapless husks only, or bitter ashes ? Does it not make the ground, if I may so say, give way under your feet, and all things look unsteady, as you see friends and children die, and neighbours depart and be no more seen ; till, after every nine or ten years, you find yourselves almost in a new world ? Surely, it makes the heart within you *unquiet*, to see all this. It makes you anxious, and you know not what may come next, and trouble is in your souls !

And finally, does it never happen, that the *terror* which *really* lies at the *bottom* of all men's hearts, if we could but tear them open, has shaken you ! The terror of death,—and of what may come upon us in that other world which lies

about us, and into which we must all, ere very long, enter, yet which no man's eyes have seen,—has this never come upon you? Have you never felt the *powers* of this world to come? have you no doubt or fear as to what may be hereafter? no sting of conscience, from time to time, which, though but for a moment, is a taste of the cup of the everlasting wrath? How say you? what is the answer which the heart gives? I know, at any rate, that, if it answers with sincerity, it cannot say, “I am at perfect *peace*, I am *at rest*.” I am certain, that, whether they confess it or not, the most worldly minds, and most resolute sinners, *are troubled and even eaten away* by this secret dread. I know that men, as the apostle tells us, are, all their life long, held in bondage by this fear of death, and by him who hath the power of it, even Satan, who reigneth in the hearts of the children of disobedience. I might say more, but I suppose you will confess that the apostle is

right, and the prophet is right, and the angels are right, and our Lord is right ! You see that *peace*,—the undisturbed rest and inward harmony of the soul,—is indeed the thing that we long for, and is the greatest treasure which even God himself can bestow.

But where is it to be discovered ? is it in heaven above, or the earth beneath ? is it round about us, could we but find the way to it, and can our eyes see it, and our hands handle it, and store it up amidst our worldly goods and blessings ? Certainly not. The heart of flesh cannot apprehend it, and the understanding of the world cannot embrace it ; and the eyes of flesh cannot behold the source from whence this peace cometh into our souls ! It is among the things which *are not seen*, which the senses cannot reach, and which are alone *eternal*. It comes of *faith*, the soul's eye and the soul's strength, whereby, even in the middle of the world, we live a life which is hidden with Christ in God. It

comes of faith—through which we are ever dwelling, in thoughts and desires, in our own eternal home, where He, who is our Lord, sitteth and reigneth, and waiteth for us at the right hand of God. It is thus that we overcome the world, which overcometh all else beside. It is thus that we are more than conquerors. And, as Israel had light in their dwellings, while darkness that might be felt was on all the houses of the Egyptians, so have we *peace* in our hearts, though all around us be moved and shaken to and fro, even to dissolution.

And this faith cometh of God, and not of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but from the Father of lights. “Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world, and this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith! Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

And this brings me to the second point.

What is it on which faith layeth so fast hold, and seeth so clearly, and draweth from it such assurances of safety as have power to still the natural unquietness of men's souls, and to give to them somewhat of the firmness of the eternal rock? It is the faith *that God is in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto men! It is that God hath so loved the world that He hath given his only begotten Son, to the intent that all who believe on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It is that Christ is the way and the truth, and the resurrection and the life, and that He saith, unto us, " Whosoever believeth in me shall live though he die; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." And therefore, being in Him who is the life, we fear wrath no longer,—no, nor the handwriting which was against us, by reason of our sins. Because He hath nailed it to his cross, and blotted it out with his own precious blood! We know that He hath said,

“ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” We have rested our heavy burden upon Him. He hath taken it upon his own shoulders and we are at rest!

We are not over troubled and anxious about earthly things, nor worn to death with the cares of this life. For He hath told us that one thing is needful, and that, if we labour, above all things under the sun, to make our calling and election sure, all other things shall be added unto us. He that feedeth the fowls of the air, and clotheth the flowers of the field, which to-day are, and to-morrow are cast into the oven, shall much more care for the souls for which the blood of his Son has been shed. We murmur not at sorrows, nay, we rejoice and are glad in them, for they make us like unto Him who, though He was the spotless Lamb of God, was yet made perfect through suffering. Finally; *we do not dread him at whom all things else and all persons tremble—even Death.*

For Christ, by dying, hath destroyed him, and by rising again hath justified us, and now, through that death-gate, we hope to pass unto a joyful resurrection. When Christ shall appear, we too shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word ! O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?"

You see, dear brethren, that not in vain hath Christ said, "Peace be unto you ! My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

But this, you will say, is too high a description of a Christian's hope and a Christian's *peace* ! I trust earnestly that you do not think so, for I am very certain that it is simple scripture, the plain word of God, and nothing more, and what every soul through Christ may attain unto ! But *you*, have not reached unto it ! Well, then, strive the more earnestly for it that you may attain it, for it is the hope of

your calling and the end of your profession. Labour to grow more and more into this likeness, to enjoy more and more of your inheritance of peace in Christ, and to make your calling and election sure. "But we have not the power in us to do it," you say! "The world distracts us, our own hearts corrupt us. We are cumbered, whether we will or not, about many things. No heavenly strength is left in us, indeed, hardly strength for things earthly! What shall we do?" Why, apply to Him who maketh the weak strong, and turneth sin into holiness, and light into darkness; the earthly into the heavenly, and corruption into incorruption! You cannot do it of your own strength, but by the help of the Holy Spirit you may accomplish all things. And this is the reason why, after Christ had said, "Peace be unto you!" He breathes on the apostles, and adds, immediately, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. For He is the purifier, and not only the giver of life, but the giver of joy, to us as to the

apostles of old—“*The Holy Ghost the Comforter!*” Without Him ye can do nothing. There is no *peace* without Him.

And this Holy Spirit beareth witness to Christ as the mighty *peacemaker* both in heaven *and* in earth. “This is He that come by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood! And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bare record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.” That is, the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity, bear witness in the heavenly places and the light which no man can approach unto, to the divine scheme of redemption through Christ’s blood; in which all these blessed persons, three, yet One holy One, harmoniously co-operate. And the holy angels, and all the hosts of heaven, desire to look into the marvellous mystery of peace and love, and continually do cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of

Sabaoth!" And the same Spirit hath borne witness upon earth, by signs and wonders and mighty deeds in them who preached the word of reconciliation, and in their holy lives, and the blessed fruits of faith. And the water in which the Lord was baptized, testified to the cleansing power of the fountain which He opened for sin and uncleanness, the true waters of life. And the blood shed on the cross testified that souls were saved by blood, and that this was indeed the very Paschal Lamb by whom wrath was reconciled, and peace proclaimed, and God and man made one. And the same witness to our peace is borne, and to the world's end will continue to be borne, by the waters of baptism, and that holy bread and wine which represents to the eyes of faith the body broken and the blood shed for us. "And," says the apostle, "there are *three* that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one."

But, it may still be said, "though there

be these witnesses to this peace and reconciliation both in heaven and in earth; and though thus it be proclaimed in the ears of the angels above and of men below, yet, surely, if this be indeed the truth, it ought to be a subject of each man's experience ! It ought to be a clear matter of fact, easily ascertained and known, whether such peace of heart and soul does indeed flow from our acceptance, through faith, of the atonement offered in the blood of Christ." I reply, that this is perfectly reasonable, and that such proof may fairly be asked. And so says the scripture itself. " If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater ; for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness *in himself.*" How ? Why by the fruits thereof. For, as saith the apostle to the Galatians, " The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace*, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit." Thus it is, that the Spirit himself beareth witness to our spirit that we are the sons of God, at peace with Him.

But still there are those who do not wish for *peace*, so long as a condition of it shall be, the embracing, with heart and soul, of the offer of mercy in the cross of Christ; and the renunciation, by the help of the Spirit, of those sins and corruptions of the heart which make a constant war between us and God, and between our consciences and the sins which we indulge. Be it so; *peace* in such a case there cannot be. Never shall peace be there. To prove that there cannot be, I do not think it necessary to reason. For God himself hath said that all such are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace, saith our God, to the wicked!" And He hath said rightly. There is no peace, save for

God's children, either in this life or the life that is to come ; but doubt *now* and an evil conscience ever foretelling the wrath that shall come ; and tribulation and anguish, and the worm, and the fire, hereafter. Such as reject salvation have denied the truth of God, and have made Him a liar. "He that believeth not God," saith the apostle, "hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life!"

Finally, *in all that we do*, let us ever hold in mind this blessed *promise of peace* which our Lord hath given to them that love Him ; and that help from above by which alone it can be bestowed upon us. It is a blessing beyond man's understanding, and such as the world can neither give nor take away. Let us, with a true faith and earnest sorrow, daily implore forgiveness

of our sins,—the soul's jars and discords,—and pray that they may be washed away in the blood of the Son of God. Our prayer will be heard. Christ will stand near unto us, and will breathe upon us and say, “Peace be unto you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost!”

When we mourn over our manifold deficiencies and backslidings, when we long for deliverance from this burden of corruption, let us pray the more earnestly for the promised Comforter, and more and more of sanctifying grace to purify the inward soul! Christ will hear us.

Again He will say, “*Peace be with you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*”

When we come, as we do this day, unto God's house to join in prayer and praises, with the great congregation, and lift up heart and voice to Him that sitteth in heaven, let us pray that He whom we worship, may prepare us for approaching his throne, that He will raise our thoughts, fix our wandering hearts, and make us fit for

his service, like the angels in heaven. Christ will hear us. He will say, “*Peace be unto you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost!*” And this peace which we taste here is but the foretaste and earnest of that everlasting bliss which God hath prepared for the children of his adoption, “where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.” “I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, from henceforth, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Even so saith the Spirit, for *they rest* from their labours.” May that rest be ours through Jesus Christ our Lord !

SERMON XVI.

JOHN xx. 17.—“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father ! But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ; and to my God, and your God.”

I SUPPOSE that most persons when, for the first time, they attentively read this passage, are sensible of considerable difficulty in understanding our Lord’s meaning ! His words are not altogether what we expect. There is even something that grates upon our feelings—something, as it would appear, of repulse and rebuke about them, which is hardly suitable to an act of spontaneous adoration and reverential love.

We find that Mary had come early in

the third morning after the burial, to the sepulchre wherein the body of the Lord lay! It would have been a consolation to that loving and courageous heart to gaze again upon the features of the dead Saviour! And more precious in the sight of Him who discerneth the spirits, would have been the tears with which she would have wetted the *holy clay*, than all the precious spices which she had brought to embalm it from corruption! The sepulchre had been fast sealed; naturally, then, it seemed secure against violence! So she marvelled and wept bitterly at finding the house of death empty, and despoiled of its treasure! "Mary," saith the evangelist, "stood without the sepulchre weeping, and as she wept she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre! And seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman! why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken

away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." You see what was the thought uppermost in her heart! the loss of her Lord; the disappearance of that holy body, the *temple* in which the divine Spirit had so long tabernacled; and about which, and in which, to the eye of natural affection and awful reverence, power, and holiness, and beauty still lingered. Though dead, it was still the Lord's! Even the vision of angels, with their faces of glory and shining garments, does not *dismay* her. Nay, it does not even startle her at all! She is so absorbed in one thought and feeling. Though she answers their question therefore, the words come almost involuntarily from her lips. It is as if she spoke not to them, with their awful presence, but to herself; "*They have taken away my Lord.*" As if she had said, "What wonder if I weep and am sad! Even the sight of such glorious beings as you are, fresh from God's presence, and with the light of heaven about you, is no

consolation for the loss of Him who was to me *the way, and the truth, and the life!* He was and is to me more than all men and angels together."

How natural! And surely we may gain much instruction from what immediately follows. For the simple narrative of facts, over and above its own interest, contains within it, as is common in scripture, a divine spirit! There is an inner meaning which faith and love discern and feed upon, rejecting the husk of the letter. What is the spiritual meaning then? Surely that no one thinks of Christ, or longs for his presence and the light of his countenance, without having Christ near him! Nay, though the soul may be overclouded, and, in the depths of its sadness, all support may seem withdrawn, till not a glimpse it may be, of the Saviour and Comforter is discernible, yet all the while He is close at hand. He is not only near at hand, but He will soon reveal himself to the afflicted. Nay, this very *sorrowfulness* which mourn-

eth for his absence and feeleth after Him as it were, in the darkness, is in itself a sign of his presence; for being near, He moveth the heart by a secret sympathy. He hath himself put it there, that there may be a profounder consciousness that all joy and life is from Him, and a keener rejoicing when the Sun of righteousness is restored, and there is again light! “Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? Rejoice thou still in God, for He is the light of thy countenance and thy God.”

And so it was here with Mary! He whom she sought among the dead was alive again. As she thought of Him and wept for Him, He was close to her, and a power went forth from Him upon her heart. It made her turn from the vision of angels, she knew not why! “And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus!” Very strange, it appears, that she should not have known

Him, even in the dimness of the early twilight. Yet, in another sense, *it was not strange*. For the faith of the heart governs the eyes. It is the soul and not the outward sense which is quick to discern ! She knew not of the resurrection. So much as the thought of it had not entered her mind. In this she was like his disciples. The hope of it had never gladdened her soul, which was unenlarged as yet to the fulness and mightiness of faith ! Like the two disciples at Emmaus, therefore, her eyes were holden, though her heart may perchance have been bewildered by a dim recognition, and burned within her, she knew not why ! Jesus saith unto her, “Woman ! why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ?” Thus spake He who knoweth the hearts and reins, and from whom the secrets of the innermost spirit are not hid ! It does not please Him yet to reveal himself to the mourner. Perhaps He spoke abruptly and harshly to her. She, supposing Him to be the gardener,

saih unto Him, “Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” It is still the same feeling. “Give me back Him whom I loved, give me back the Lord !”

Jesus saith unto her, “*Mary!*” This simple, thrilling word discovers who He is to the astonished and despairing woman. Yet it was the same voice which, just before, she had failed to recognize,—which had nothing divine about it, nothing to stir the soul ! Why ? Because He *then* willed that it should be strange ! But *now* He willed it should be clad with power, that it should bring light and knowledge. It was the voice, *the word*, which called Lazarus from the grave, that stilled the winds and the waves, and there was a great calm, that spake as never other voice spake from lips of flesh, and was power and life. And therefore, being no longer strange, but itself, it revealed at a stroke the living Saviour. It was not the gar-

dener, nor yet a mortal man any more, but her Lord and her God ! " She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabbi, which is to say, Master." Evidently as she uttered these words, she threw herself at his feet, and, in token of worship, clasped his knees ! Then Jesus saith unto her, "*Touch me not!*" These are the words which I wish to examine. "*Touch me not.*" Why so ? Was it unfitting that she should prostrate herself in the very dust, and *lower*, if it were possible, before the Son of God ? Was He who, in the days of his humiliation, not only did not reject, but sometimes solemnly blessed both the confession and adoration of faith, less worthy of it, now that all power had been committed to Him both in heaven and earth ? Was He less divine when the hour of his entrance in great triumph into the gates of heaven was nigh at hand ? Was the flesh which the Godhead wore less hallowed, or its form and features less majestic, now that hunger and thirst, and

pain and sorrow, had departed from it, and it had arisen like a giant refreshed, and shaken off from it, for evermore, the dust and dishonours of the grave ? Surely not. The worship and prostration, alike of soul and body, before the risen and triumphant Saviour, was now a double duty, nay, a blessed and uncontrollable necessity in all them that believe. It could not be, therefore, that Christ intended any rebuke for this mark of reverence and loving awe which man and angel owe to the incarnate God. “*At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.*” “*Let all the angels of God worship Him.*”

Still less can it be true, as some have wildly imagined, that the body of our Lord, being now spiritualized and changed since his resurrection, had something in it that even *repelled* the *touch* of men ! That it might destroy or grievously injure them who approached it, without having themselves undergone a similar and preparatory change ! That indeed it began to exer-

cise *new* powers, even while still on earth, is perfectly evident. The Lord's sudden appearances in the midst of his disciples, his traversing, with a supernatural quickness and subtlety, material bolts and bars, his vanishings away in like manner, and his journey without companions, and, as far as we know, unseen by human eyes, from Jerusalem to Galilee to the appointed mountain, all indicates a body like a spirit. It was the beginning of that *spiritual* penetrating body, at least, in which we shall finally all be clad! But it was not yet clothed in that intolerable glory, of which we read in the Book of Revelation, which no mortal eye, as it now is, could behold and live! It still looked, and was, save in those new powers, like other bodies! And if any influences issued from it, they were like those which streamed forth from him, in the days of his ministry, when virtue went forth to the touch of *faith*, and the very fringe of his garment, being alive with a blessed power, staunched the issue

of blood ! All in the Saviour, both in body and spirit, was fitted to save, and not destroy. No doubt to them who reject the atoning sacrifice, a consuming fire will issue from the eyes of the Judge. But to them who loved Him, and had faith in Him, even now that the rays of the coming glory were already visible upon his face, nothing but healing could have issued from the touch of Him.

But there is another sense which we may assign to this expression. The disciples were still unconscious of the resurrection from the dead. They were still a stricken, scattered flock. They still lay benumbed, as it were, and helpless under the thunderbolt that had fallen upon them. The King of Israel was dead ; the Saviour was conquered ! All their hope that He should redeem his people was an idle dream ! Surely then it befitted the Lord's love, that he should *instantly* gather again this scattered flock, and snatch them, by the tidings of his rising again, out of the

place of darkness and of the deep ! Why may He not, therefore, have intended to address Mary to this effect,—“ It is true that I am risen from the dead ! *it is I myself!* And very fitting it is that you should express your joy and your adoration ! But as I am not yet ascended into heaven, you will have opportunities enough of testifying the reverence of your heart ! It is now of all things the most pressing that my disciples should know that I am arisen ! Tarry not, therefore, to touch me now. But haste and tell them that the grave is conquered, and that I ascend to my God and their God ! ” Now I do not say that there may be nothing of this meaning in our Lord’s words—there may be ! But this explanation does not answer either the full force or connexion of the words. 1st. It could not be said to be so urgent a case, that a common act of adoration should not be paid Him ! Nor do his words imply that she lingered overmuch in this act of wor-

ship. It is not a question of more or less ! If the words *do, in any way,* contain a prohibition, it is of the act altogether “**TOUCH ME NOT !**” 2ndly. If the reason of Christ’s prohibition was the urgent necessity laid upon Him to convey the good tidings to his disciples, He would naturally have joined the two ! He would have said, “Touch me not;” spend not the precious time in embracing my knees, but *go and bear my disciples word.* He would not have inserted between the injunction and the reason for it the words, “*For I am not yet ascended to my Father,*” which break the natural connexion. 3rdly. In that case the message to his disciples would have been, “*I am risen from the dead—I am again your living Saviour!*” But that is not the message with which He charged Mary ! It is, “*Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God.*”

The plain and simple meaning then

surely is this. “ Do not worship me *now*, clasping my knees, as if this were the mode in which henceforth you may testify your love and adoration to me. You must learn *another* way, a spiritual way, when I am ascended into the heavens, where my throne is prepared at God’s right hand, and where I shall reign, the almighty but invisible King, over all things in heaven and earth. And since my tarrying upon earth is now short, let my disciples know that I am going thither from whence I came, even the bosom of the eternal Father. On earth and in the flesh they shall see me no more. But from heaven I shall be with them, and they and you shall adore me there with that worship to your invisible Lord which you pay now only to my bodily presence. Faith shall teach thee and them greater and more blessed things than these.”

In fact, the case was the same as yet, with the women that followed Him from Galilee and those who loved Him at Jerusalem,

as it was with the apostles themselves. The best of them knew not the Scriptures, neither the power of God. They discerned not the spirituality of the kingdom which Christ had come to found, nor the power of that blood poured out upon Calvary, which by God's eternal counsel sprinkled the road to his heavenly glory. They knew not of that mighty outpouring of the transforming Spirit, by which He should convert the world, be present in almighty power, albeit taken from mortal eyes, and should baptize his saints in his own baptism of blood and fire ! And yet be not hasty to condemn them ! Though there tarried about them much hardness of heart and unbelief ; though of their own fault, in great measure, they saw not the will and purpose of God in scripture, but were besotted and dazzled by worldly and carnal thoughts, yet, in spite of that, they *were* Christ's disciples indeed. They were men of like passions as we are, mixed strangely up of good and evil, of heavenly

things and earthly, of belief and of unbelief. But in spite of it all, they loved Him ; yea, they had given up all and followed Him ! They fondly hoped in Him, and now that God, as they imagined, had rendered their dreams of glory and salvation nought, they did all they could ! They mourned with broken hearts and spirits, over the Holy One and the Good whom they had lost. This mixture of a true love with imperfect knowledge was the case with Mary here, though she lay at the feet of her risen Lord, who had sprung, like himself, from death unto life, and she was giddy and intoxicated by such a sudden and glorious discovery ! No doubt, could she in a moment have put her thoughts into words, as *He* knew them who seeth the heart, it was still this earthly, and uncertain, glimmering faith, which, in spite of the strength of her love, lay at the bottom of it all !

In having her Lord restored to her, she looked forward to the same *visible* inter-

course of eye and ear to which she had been hitherto accustomed. He would go in and out among his disciples as heretofore. He would visit with his divine presence the hearth at Bethany, and the brother and sisters whom He loved. They would still behold the wonders of healing mercy which his right hand would work, and sit at his feet and drink in the oracles which flowed from his lips ! I do not indeed suppose that the heart of this faithful woman was agitated and swollen by those visions of temporal pride and grandeur which mingled overmuch with the love of the apostles. It may have been, as is the wont of women, more disinterested in its affection. But though the *presence* and converse of the Lord was no doubt dearer to her thoughts than any outward majesty and power, she would, not unnaturally, look forward to his conquest over his earthly enemies. He who could not be holden by death, could not again become the despised and rejected of men. He would smite those that smote Him ;

his enemies would become his footstool. He would be a king on earth, and his friends would share his glory. You see, therefore, what a mixture of strength and weakness there was in her and them ; how much to love, how much to pity, how much to condemn ! But He who was made in our likeness, as He remembers that *we* are but dust, so He remembered that they, who had given up all things for his sake, were beset with many infirmities. He accepted the love—He forgave the infirmities,—He strengthened the weakness—He illuminated the darkness ! He was gentle to them, as a shepherd to his lambs. He pitied them as a Father pitieith his children.

But his tarrying upon earth was now short, and drew rapidly to a close. There was no time to lose, in teaching those who were called, henceforth, to be fishers of men, the subverters of the kingdom of darkness, and the proclaimers of the everlasting Gospel ! The Spirit poured out upon them, must work that which their

own strength had failed to accomplish. Their eyes must be opened with a supernatural light! The true Gospel of the risen Saviour and glorified Son of God, must be written by the finger of Christ on those doubting hearts! And this is what Christ did, during the forty days of his tarrying. He cleared away the mists, with which their earthly passions and national prejudices had obscured the truth of God. Day by day, and hour by hour, He *moulded their hearts and souls* to this divine office, till they were fitted, with his spiritual image within them and his wisdom on their lips, to convert the world! Thus it is that He conversed with the disciples at Emmaus. “Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have entered into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He *expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.*”

And this will enable us to explain that tone, not of *rebuke or stern admonition*, but yet undoubtedly of expostulation and *gentle repulse*, which is discernible in our Lord's reply to Mary, "*Touch me not.*" That is, she and they *ought* even before his death, and the opening of their hearts by his Spirit after his resurrection, to have understood the *nature* of his kingdom, and the inward, spiritual salvation which the Lord of glory had taken flesh upon Him to work out. Often had He spoken of his *death*, of his resurrection, of the baptism of tears and blood which awaited, in this world, those who should embrace Him as their everlasting portion. But their hearts had been hard, their ears had been deaf, and, for lack of faith, their eyes had been dim ! They *understood not* the words that He spake unto them ! This is the cause of the upbraiding tone, if such there be. She is not reproached, however lovingly, because she is overjoyed, nor because she worships, nor because she would fain tarry

in the Lord's presence, within the sound of his voice, and the light of his eyes. This was far from Him ! But for the lack of spiritual knowledge and divine faith, and for the lingering remainder of the carnal mind, not yet purged away by the fire of the Spirit.

But after all, granting all this, could she *touch Him*, when He should be ascended into heaven ? could she reach Him in those divine abodes, she whose delight had been in the Lord's presence upon earth ? Verily, brethren, she could ; or hard would be the lot, not of her only, but of us too, who, not having seen, have yet believed, and rejoice with a hope unspeakable and full of glory ! It was a small thing for men's salvation, after all, to have seen the Lord with their earthly eyes, to have touched his garment, embraced his knees, and looked upon his countenance according to the flesh ! How often did the infidel and reprobate Jews gaze on Him, and press upon, and touch that fleshly temple of the

eternal Spirit! How close to Him, to the *living, visible, incarnate* God, were his judge, his accusers, his crucifiers; they who tore his flesh with iron scourges, and smote Him on the face, and with wicked hands, fastened Him, with nails, to the accursed tree! No, even then, when He was a man among them, it was the *eye of the soul* that *beheld* Him. It was the heart that recognised Him. It was the hand of a living faith that embraced and laid hold upon Him! Why those who touched Him, having their hearts hardened by unbelief, were *not near to Him*. Yea very, very far off from Him were they all. They were as far from Him, as sin from holiness. They were as far as the *highest heaven from the lowest deep*.

We that believe on Him and love Him, embrace Him! We hold Him in our hearts, and possess Him in our souls! God-head and manhood, all that he is, in his adorable fulness, his love, his graces, his power, faith layeth hold upon it all! “If

a man love me, he will keep my words; and my father *will love him*, and we will come unto him, and *make our abode* with him! Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." He is our guest, our companion, our constant inmate; we see Him, we hear Him, we converse with Him. We not only touch Him, but we are *one with Him, and He one with us!* Behold, *the very heavens are opened*, nay, they are bowed down, *and God is come to dwell among men!* And so it was with the apostles and the holy men and women after his resurrection. Yea, though their eyes had seen, and their hands handled the word of life, they not only discerned Him as well, when He was in heaven, as they had done on earth, but, with the eyes of faith, with far more fulness and distinctness. By as much more as the disciples—illuminated by light from on high, and taught all mysteries

and all knowledge,—surpassed the same disciples, while still entangled in unbelief, and worldly conceptions of Christ, by so much more did they grasp, and touch, and embrace Him, when he sat down in the heaven of heavens, than when they beheld Him, and listened to Him on the hills and lakes of Galilee, and in the temple at Jerusalem.

And if you ask how such things can be, and how Christ can be *so near*, and yet, in earthly reckoning, *so far away*—I answer; Because *He is God*, and is in our souls, therefore, by his divine presence. Yea, in Him we live and move and have our Being! And because, where the Godhead of Christ is, there, in a living and effectual way, is the manhood also, which is indissolubly joined with it; even the whole and undivided God-Man! And by his Spirit, whom He sendeth, He worketh in us, as in the apostles, this his blessed and comfortable presence. “And I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you ano-

ther Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him ; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you !” It is, then, by this Holy Spirit, which Christ hath given us, and whereby we cry Abba ! Father ! that we touch Christ, yea, are touched by Him, and upborne by the everlasting arms.

And in this, we are spared the trial and troubles of Mary. We have never beheld the degradations of Christ’s humanity, the sorrows and the shames which not only burthened his sinless soul, but marred and ploughed his innocent flesh, till he looked to the outward eye the meanest and saddest of the sons of men, and He had no beauty that men should desire Him ! We do not come with his sorrowing disciples and the faithful women to seek the living among the dead, the King of kings and Lord of

lords in the rocky grave ! We do not behold the dust, or the sepulchral stone, or the lifeless body, on which indeed corruption was not yet come, but which the Spirit had left. We see the glory, and the power, and the Saviour risen, and the shining angels keeping watch where the Lord lay ! We mourn not for a dead Saviour, but rejoice in a living and a reigning one ; who hath raised us with himself, by his grace to sit in heavenly places ! It is no longer, "*Touch me not !*" But "come unto me, and be blessed with me in the place which I have prepared for you, with my Father, and your Father, and my God and your God."

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